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Listening at Dawn:

Trans* Storywork for All My Relations

A thesis

Submitted in fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy in Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2023

Abstract

This is a love letter to trans* people: a reminder of our place and legacy of trans*formation. In the form of collaborative and ceremonial research, this PhD with creative practice component is an affirmation of embodied, elemental storytelling as a necessary practice for unearthing and grounding the traditional knowledge that Indigenous-Trans* (Indigi-Trans*) people carry within our body-spirits. This creative practice (co)research uplifts liminal states of being, as given to us by our elemental ancestors, in the decolonial project of Indigenous (encompassing Black and Trans*) body-land reclamation and restoration. By recognizing and nourishing the power of the between, this thesis remembers practices of place that are rooted in the body, often our last piece of ancestral land as displaced and diasporic Indigi-Trans* people. Spanning the coasts of Aotearoa-NZ to the west coast of Ixtlán (Turtle Island-US), this creative project listened to the somatic presence of Indigi-Trans* creators (co-researchers) who are in varying states of connection to their ancestral lands and traditions. To account for sudden and extreme shifts in safety and access due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I created online and on-site rituals to sustain connection and retrace our ancestors' techniques of time and space travel. By engaging with body-awareness practices or ritual performances offered in this project, co-researchers and storytellers were able to experiment with 'knew' ways of engaging the ancestral power of place. As a member of the communities contributing to this project, I witnessed an important transformation within co-researchers from a sense of landlessness to a sense of infinite place. This transformation gave co-researchers and storytellers a new source of power, strengthening their spiritual-mental capacity to receive and grow (especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic). In a political climate of increasing backlash to trans* and Indigenous sovereignty, this creative project is a unique contribution to the kete, or basket of knowledge that we offer to the coming generations of trans*formational practitioners and scholars.

Situated within the realms of Indigenous, Queer, Xicana and Critical Black Trans* Feminist theories, this creative project also draws upon performance, sound, and poetic practice to hatch another creative methodology that centers place-based ritual. As I created this thesis in a liminal waterscape, crossing back and forth between Aotearoa and Ixtlán, colliding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I opened myself to theories generated by the lands that nourished me. Thus, a Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wahine informed approach emerges as the prow of this banka, or canoe that carries other Black, Indigenous and Trans* lineages of scholarship. From this fluid place of theory, my practice as an Indigi-

Trans* ritualist, poet, and sound artist grounds these theories in my body and the body-lands of my co-researchers. Together, we create a Kappi (Ilocano crab motif referencing Maui's fishing up of our islands) methodology, or the underwater reflections of celestial movement as mapped by Indigi-Trans* freedom strategies. As the co-researchers and storytellers of this project demonstrate, many Indigi-Trans* people are (re)birthing and (re)creating life and possibility just by existing. Our power of place, in body and land, can link and strengthen all Indigenous sovereignty movements when our communities take up the call to foster each person's fluid potential.

Although this entire project is creative, as a PhD with creative practice component, this project is an ebb and flow of written and other media components. Most of the 'creative component' occurred during the co-research stage of this thesis and has been documented via photographs, video, participant testimony, soundscapes, and poetry on a separate, companion website (https://transjoy.cargo.site/). These artifacts of ritual research are also discussed within the harvest (data) section of the written portion, but reader/listeners are encouraged to view the website in tandem. Poetry, narrative, and soundscapes (hyperlinks or bone icons) weave throughout the written portion to create a multi-sensory experience that privileges my roots in aural tradition. Together, the performances, website, poetry, and soundscapes constitute roughly thirty percent of the final thesis, weighing more heavily on a written portion of seventy percent. Listener/readers are encouraged to experience the written and multi-media portions in tandem, cycling back and forth in a playful spirit as the next step of creative practice: listener participation. Please enter this project with the care and excitement invited of all listeners when the storyteller asks, "are you ready to hear a story?"

Dedication

For the love of transformational beings.

This is the story of how we stayed.

This is the constellation of our power.

This is the texture of our mycelium, a textile to reflect our network.

This is a map for my still-covered siblings.

This is a baby deferred.

This is a desire for harmony, the kind that can only come from change.

This is breath between spaces, connecting water lest they harden.

This is what I needed to hear when no one would listen, when no one could remember.

This is a step in the dance of creation.

This is more than I have time for, but all I can say.

This is learning how to listen.

This is a marking for all my kin.

Mihi

Ngā mihi aroha ki ngā whenua me ngā wai tīpuna. I give thanks to all the lands and waters that have held me and this work during the last four years (and every cycle leading up to this one). I give thanks to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, the ocean that holds all my homelands. I give thanks to Mt. Tahoma, Te Pirongia Maunga, the mountain ranges of Coast Salish, Tongva and Chumash peoples, and the hills, valleys, and deserts of Miwok peoples, Chiricahua-Apache peoples, and Cahuilla peoples. I give thanks to the Duwamish River and Te Waikato Awa. I give thanks to the ngāhere, the evergreen forests and all the life they nourish. I give thanks to all the clouds who have ushered me back and forth across the moana. I give thanks to all the rains who remix sun and moon light to create rainbows. I give thanks to the winds who never let me grow complacent. I give thanks to mycelium everywhere.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou e ngā whetū tārake i te rangi. I give thanks to my pamilya, the beautiful hearts and hands that gave birth to me: lola and lolo (Salvacion Barruga Luna and Rosendo Luna Sr.), mom and dad (Vivian Luna and Caesar Pizano), my big sister (Marisol Luna-Pizano Puerta), and grandma and grandpa Pizano (Stella Rojás and Antonio Pizano). I give thanks to my pamangking, Jacquez and Jiya Puerta, for letting me hold you during these precious first years of life. I give thanks to all my brilliant aunties and gunkles—your stories give me back my colors. I give thanks to my innumerous cousins; may we continue to find each other. I give thanks to all my relatives who have passed recently: lola (Salvacion Barruga Luna), Auntie Mercy (Israel-Canda), Uncle Frank (Brass), Auntie Carolyn (Priestley), and all who were taken from us during this COVID-19 pandemic. I give thanks to all who were taken from us by state violence and institutionalized racism, all who were taken by fear and hopelessness. May we all find sacred rest.

Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou e ngā toka tū moana. I give thanks to all my supervisors: Leonie Pihama, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Rachel Chapman, and Donna Campbell. Your confidence and ferocity gave me the love to complete this ceremony. I give thanks to my mentor-friends throughout this thesis journey, especially Whaea Ngaronoa Renata, Whaea Aroha Yates-Smith, Vicky Young, Tāwhanga Nopera, Hineitimoana Greensill (and the whole Greensill whānau), and Ngāhuia Murphy. I give thanks to all the movement-teachers and danzantes in my life, especially Santiago Crosby-Vega and Dani Tirrell. I give thanks to all the taonga pūoro practitioners past and present who have reconnected me to my love of sound and its power to heal, especially Hirini Melbourne, Elizabeth Gray, Alé Jensen-Whakataka, and James Webster.

Ngā mihi aroha ki a koutou e ngā pua o taku manawa. Por mi dualidad, Aran Osborne, miigwech chi-miigwech for your unconditional love and support—it humbles and strengthens me every day. Alé Jensen-Whakataka, ngā mihi hōhonu ki a koe e te tau o taku ate. To all my beloveds in the B2 crew and the INDAK-KANIKANI crew—your true offer of queerdo love and family continues to uplift and inspire me. Thank you for playing with me! To all my beloved co-researchers—your vulnerability, trust, and courage to unravel is a gift to us all. To all my kin from Duwamish territories all the way to Kirikiriroa, Aotearoa—your trans*/queer love and joy is my delight, my nourishment, and my challenge to grow deeper and wider every day. Thank you for the gift of your presence and dreams.

Finding our place in the center, again. I love us in all our forms, even when we are afraid, even when we forget. I love the shape of our grieving face, gilded with waitā. I offer you waitī, libations spilling over us. I love the curve of your arms when no one else is looking. I love your tiptoe jump and spin when you can't contain your wonder any longer. I love that your voices all end up in the same pile of katakata. I love your howl at the bottom of the stairwell when you didn't know we were there. I love your stumble, sacred rest. I love your prayers drawn every morning in the spaces where light whispers "maybe." I love your accessories love-biting me when we embrace, getting caught in our hair, we cannot quick separate. I love your quiet swagger, something learned on the field, not the streets. I love your nihilism in a world that owes you everything back. I love your freak-pride and how good it makes your food taste. I love your confidence in the unknown because we must. I love your strategies in unseen realms. I love your scar tissue holding us tight. I love how impatient we are, even when we learn to wait. I love it when you forget yourself because we meet again. I love the fragrance of your roots when you're ready to pull up. I love it when you do meet me where I'm at. I love the blossom you stow away in your braid. I love your ringaringa that could span this coast. I love it when you reveal the ome-teotl in every move.

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Kei Kōnei Ahau / Here I am

Chapter Summaries

Movement Usa (1) introduces readers/listeners to an embodied and multi-sensory engagement with this thesis, preparing a way for different languages to emerge and tell a collective story. Positionality, motivations for this work and an overview of the movements (or chapters) create one of many portals to enter this project with a 'listening body'.

Movement Duha (2) is a dance with theory where we search, problematize, witness, and eventually abandon theory to embrace an embodied refusal of theories that do not recognize or embrace Indigenous Trans* experience. After we are digested by theories, becoming lost and found by creative practice, this chapter frames a new house of theory where Indigi-Trans* experiences are present in the origins (liminal traditions) and the futures (creative practice).

Movement Tulo (3) brings the research into an embodied exchange with the theoretical foundations that were created in the second movement. After setting the altar to honor the grief that begins to flow alongside and through the creation of this thesis, readers are introduced to a methodology that is anchored below ground and above sky—accounting for the fluid survival strategies practiced by Indigi-Trans* creators. The methods that sprout from this 'kappi methodology' seek to transcend the academy and resist attacks on trans* life.

Movement Upat (4) is where the methods of co-research rituals and fruiting rituals are expanded and the harvest is shared for readers/listeners to touch and be touched by the stories. The line between researcher and researched continue to blur as I bring my own body to the text alongside co-researchers and storytellers.

Movement Lima (5) is the table where the harvest is processed—lovingly separated and pulled through lenses of grief, rage, and joy to understand the strategies of freedom and refusal that transpired. Landing in elemental movements of connection and transmutation, I draw readers/listeners towards an inconclusive pause where we are asked to remember our responsibility as listeners and seek no further than allowed. Indigi-Trans* sovereignty of body and the knowledge housed therein is supported by the lineage of our elemental relations.

Movement Unom (6) is a bird's eye view of the thesis, reviewing the movements in the context of research limitations, invitations for further research, and implications of creative practice research in the field of Indigenous Studies. Readers/listeners are invited to reflect on how creative practice and Indigi-Trans* theory continues decolonial or restorative projects, pushing us beyond acceptance into (r)evolutionary practices. Closing and clearing rituals are offered to mindfully exit the ritual thesis space.

A Note on Language and Navigation…

'Trans*' and 'trans' will appear throughout this thesis, used interchangeably, although they have different meanings because I can play with language that uses my body as reference. As a transperson over the age of 30, I am seeing my articulation of trans-ness already becoming outdated as the next generation seeks further liberation from the English language. Instead of becoming trapped by languages that are not my origin, I am more interested in bringing through Indigenous words and concepts for gender experiences and embodiment. Beyond terms such as queer, you may encounter Indigenous phrases such as 'bakla,' or 'takatāpui.' Please visit the glossary for more discussion of these terms, including other Indigenous words that sprout through the fabric of this work. Besides English, te reo Māori appears the most in this thesis, but I will not interpret kupu Māori directly within the body of text. This is to ensure flow and to speak free from explanation, not privileging reo Pākēhā (in this case, English) over our Indigenous languages. Readers and listeners are welcome to bask in languages they do not understand, remembering that being locked out by language incomprehension is a common experience among Indigenous people. Language barriers, coupled with trans*formative bodies has often left many of us silently watching, raging under foreign rule, or listening for the places where we are all related.

This thesis can be likened to a collection of artifacts (text, soundscapes, visual media, poetry, and guided movement) that reflect a ceremonial process that is the research. This collection has been curated to elicit a wandering feel, full of non-linear shapes and interruptions, redirecting reader/listeners to new side-paths. **Please click on the small bone icons** throughout the text to activate soundscapes that accompany each section. If you find yourself confused or still in a state of unknown, this is part of the liminal experience I have sought to create for readers/listeners and I do my best to provide touchstones for grounding in each movement/chapter.



The end gave a beginning…

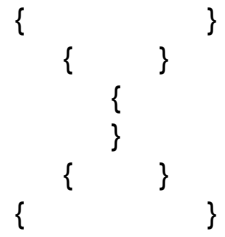
In the middle, there is oro. A wave of sound, rising and falling forever, caressing the potential that is [redacted]. In the ending, there is light. A light so brilliant that all is black. In the beginning, there is darkness. A darkness so bright that there is no need for light. Dark and light give birth to each other, swapping positions with ease. They leak out of each other's many mouths, never arrived or departed. Their repetition is a chant centered by oro. Oro grows the middle, marking each cycle with swells and bursts of color. Tones of all shapes and dreams spill and flood the dark-light. They form a channel between and through, tunneling a divide that never forms. Impossible beauty and chaos, oro gives a taste for life.

We are made of oro. We are the descendants of the middle {passage}. Beings of the middle, welcome! We have been preparing for you, anticipating your return.

In this opening movement, I clear the space for you, my listeners, to engage this creative practice thesis with a multi-sensory approach. I have just invoked our trans* ancestors by sharing a de/creation story that speaks of the middle, which is the origin of my trans* whakapapa. I will continue to call in a trans* genealogy where I locate trans* and two-spirit/ed movement in our elemental relatives (wind, water, fire, etc.) thus naming our origins and relationship to more-than-human ancestors. Here, I propose an embodied approach, or analysis that is generated by and for the body (physical, energetic) to understand these relationships between trans* experience and phenomenological beings (i.e. the morning/evening star, night-time rainbows). After centering our trans* reflections, I step into an overview of my position as a creative native scholar and manuhiri in Aotearoa. As Iwi Taketake, an indigenous person, I choose to work with the language of the land (te reo Māori) where this thesis was born. Even though my reo Māori knowledge is quite limited and young, I align with tangata whenua through language sovereignty and in turn, am brought back to my own ancestral tongues. Reflecting on the complexity of my

own lineage, which is fractured, but not weakened by displacement and assimilation, I return to my last piece of ancestral land: my body. Within this body, there is a tradition buried for safe keeping by my ancestors: trans*formation.

Having cleared the space for a reframe of tradition and creation, I will prepare us to become listeners and dancers. To receive the stories within this thesis, restorative listening from deeper in the body is necessary. Once we are ready for experimentation and play throughout this thesis, we will enter the realm of Indigenous Trans* (Indigi-Trans*) epistemologies as a position for all of us to contemplate, but not yet understand. From this position, I share an overview of the movements to come, reminding us that we have the freedom to enter the thesis from any movement or portal. You will find a guided movement prompt at the end of this chapter, a movement to activate whole-body listening. The listening body is key to navigating this inter-dimensional journey. Now, remember to drink water and honor yourself! We are so excited to share this love-labor with you.



Enter with discretion.

we are the body of knowledge that has been buried the farthest below, the first to be murdered, the first to be buried, the farthest below. we are the body of knowledge that has been forgotten by the living, for those who knew us by our name have died in battle. we are the body of knowledge that has been lying in waiting, patiently shivering with the imprints of those laid over us, changing the shape of our bones. we are the body of knowledge that was stored, to be awakened at the chosen moment.

we have been restless in our graves, memorizing the groans and chants of the earth's core, sharpening our obsidian. we are behind the last line of defense, beyond cihuātl and conētl, we

are the ending and the beginning, the patient rākau, ready to restore balance in the wake of sacred transgression.

Diasporic Positions

Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Tāwhirimatea

Matariki

Whenua Kore

Aztlan

Wai / Danum

"Why do we sing and dance? Because it's our only natural resource we can give without harming others."

-tutu conversations, Mauna a Wakea (Jan 2020)

This is a story about liminoid power unearthing ancestral memory and practice.

A story about threading, about becoming home, about the passages between and through--a freedom unfathomable by either--only and all. This is a story about survival through ritual and prayer.

TūRuaPō: to have a vision

Matemate-ā-one: the longing for home that occurs when an elder/parent dies, the longing for their land / body, to become like soil.

This is a story about Magkakaugnay: intra-weaving, bringing ourselves back despite cycles of dispossession and removal. The denial that gives birth to 'us' and 'them.' What is dissolved when we all are free?

This is a story about the power of the potential to be neither here, nor there, but grounded in the place where all edges touch, the interstitial fluid of a collective body. A story about the jellyfish, coral, and mycelium that activates, uncovers, and recycles constellations of oracles. Tlazolteotl, the ochre-smeared mouth that consumes, composts, excretes, repeats. The pattern deepens, the web strengthens. Lakapati, fertility embodied and full of genesis. We proliferate, absorb, and refashion gods into our likeness.

To be Trans* is to be Sovereign

This is a story of trans* sovereignty: a felt sense of the liminal beings and moments in our pre-human genealogy and thus, a story of Indigenous sovereignty. Our native traditions can unlock transformative powers that bridge the space between 'us' and 'them.' By remembering our stories of trans*ancestors, we can cross the dichotomy of colonizer and colonized. The members of our communities who can hold and move skillfully through the complexities of decolonial practice are often separated from the collective through transphobia, homophobia, trans-misogyny and other enforcements of colonized gender and sexuality. Trans and gender-diverse people are well-equipped ("*la facultad*," Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 60) to traverse realms, bridge ancestral knowledge, and pull together disparate pieces of community because we grow at the edges (the spaces between that connect one to another). Black Feminist scholar, Legacy Russell (2020) recognizes "non-binary bodies or other bodies that refuse to perform gender in a normative way" (p. 72) as a 'glitch.' Russell (2020) has created a strand of feminism (Glitch Feminism) theorizing what power occurs when our trans*, two-spirit/ed, and non-binary bodies fail to function "...within the confines of a society that fails us" (p. 72). I read 'function' here as another form of assimilation, which is an illusory state for trans* people even when we do replicate cisgendered, heterosexual whiteness. We can never be ignorant to the ways in which cisgendered, colonial cultures fail us. Whatever strategies we have evolved to thrive despite

these contexts is often read as resilience. Whether or not it is resilience, it is not to be taken for granted or abused (Alok, 2020; Osorio, 2021), and it is a call to action that needs a response from our communities. Indigi-Trans* people's unwavering existence calls for interdependence and care among all genders and Indigenous communities. We cannot get free alone.

A Trans Genealogy

I have choreographed a research ceremony of somatic listening, land/water-based knowledge, and collective storytelling by visiting elemental ancestors who generate life from a liminal place and time. To find ourselves as trans-cendental peoples in the water, land, and sky is to reanimate and connect with the elemental agents of change in our whakapapa. These ancestors seek to re-emerge as relevant in a human future swelling with apocalyptic potential. Here, I propose an embodied practice of locating trans* people in our elemental relatives, simultaneously locating elemental powers of creativity and transformation within ourselves. I use the term, 'embodied,' to refer to all the ancestral information and elemental resonance that is stored within a body (in this context, I mostly refer to human bodies). To be embodied is also to be aware of our collective and individual nature, being able to sense internal and external feedback simultaneously. It is not easy or safe to be embodied, especially for Indigenous or Trans* people, but it is a necessary state through which we pass (and return) to understand our right to trans*form, grow and live.

As we turn to face large shifts for our planet and all our relatives, it is our responsibility as future ancestors to prepare to pass down the tools of transformation and peace which our descendants inevitably seek. To find these reflections, I have created a movement practice that comes from my own movement memory as a two-spirit/ed and trans* descendant of Ilocano / Visayan / Xicano / Chiricahua Apache / Unknown lineage. By drawing on my knowledge as a bodyworker, martial artist and dancer, I activate, listen and ultimately release energy and knowledge held in places where disparate, yet connected beings meet (i.e. estuaries, airports, dawn). I have also worked with some of my trans*, two-spirit/ed, and non-binary siblings who have grown up with their Indigenous practices or are seeking to re-establish them through land and water-based relationships. Somatic exercises, land-water listening, and ritual story-telling merge in this co-

research with trans* relatives; gathering with and through our land/body to flesh a complex narrative of Indigenous land-water epistemologies. Somatic awareness, the practice of being present to body sensation and information, comes from an Indigenous understanding of interdependence, but is articulated and utilized mostly in meditation and therapeutic contexts. I rest in somatic practice as preparation to contact elemental knowledge in my lineage; visiting sites of loss, rupture or blockage presented by my own human ancestry. By offering a movement of listening and release in these places (within myself or in other bodies of land and water), I have sought to feel beyond my human ancestors and focus the elemental memories that exist within me. In doing so, I inevitably ally with the energies of the whenua where I have lived and began this doctoral journey--Aotearoa, as well as the wairua and mauri of other lands with whom I connected during this time. Their ever-present guidance is essential to my work and play as I move backwards, side-to-side, forward, around, and through lineage to break, release and reassemble a more powerful self/collective.

Ngā Whakapapa Arero

As you may have already noticed, te reo Māori is woven throughout the written and oral parts of this thesis. I began my thesis in Aotearoa-New Zealand and the language of this land continues to influence how I understand and have conceived this project. Te Ao Māori continues to influence my expressions in this thesis because I have been fed and taught by tangata whenua over the last four years, forcing me to reconnect with my blood tongues. As one of the few non-Māori students in Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, it has been a welcome challenge to confront what it means to be Indigenous far from the land of my ancestors. It has also been a gift to find Pasifika relatives connected not by soil, but by salt water, as I come to understand the deep relationships established by our sea-faring ancestors. Their need and desire to navigate Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa is a migration thread that crosses all borders of Pacific identity, collapsing colonial Pacific/Asian borders as even some Māori trace their ancestral migrations from as far north as current-day Taiwan. My mother's people are from Cebu, one of 7,640 islands that compose the archipelago now known as the Philippines. These islands are some of many that our sea-voyaging ancestors

would have touched as they followed the pull of their desire to find new land, trade routes, and futures.

Our tongues reflect these routes of migration and Indigenous exploration. Visayan, Cebuano, Ilocano and Tagalog are all languages that my mother's family spoke before assimilating in the U.S. These mother tongues are all related to te reo Māori in addition to many languages spoken throughout Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa in a genealogy of oceanic migration. A whakapapa of tongues, some cut, some curled and paralysed, some whole and waiting, and at least one still shackled and singing. Te reo Māori is the first Indigenous language that I have had the honor of beginning to speak. Although I was raised with Visayan, Tagalog and Spanish in my home, English dominated my mouth/mind at school and in my wider community. I have struggled to get Spanish back and even then, it is another legacy of colonizers in my father's homelands (the borderlands between Northern Mexico and modern-day New Mexico). I am still learning the names of what my father's ancestors spoke before Spanish came to rearrange our tongues. Many Xicanos gravitate to Nahuatl as an ancestral tongue, but I have felt that my ancestors were not only Nahuatl-speaking, but more likely Apache. Only recently have I been able to confirm this feeling by visiting my abuela's ancestral land and learning more about our Chiricahua Apache lineage. Because of generations of language trauma, I have yet to practice any of my ancestral tongues. Thus, to work with te reo Māori is a huge step towards decolonizing not only my mouth, but my entire being because language is the transmission of culture.

To think and speak in English is an on-going form of colonization that I am not sure I will ever break within myself. To create a future of free tongues (and therefore heart-minds) for my descendants, I must listen with the Indigenous languages wherever I find myself. Learning te reo Māori has been a process of re-wiring and breaking up internalized colonial beliefs and patterns. Although I am still very new to speaking, writing, and feeling in te reo Māori, it is a precious practice to me because it has already inspired me to learn words in Tagalog and Ilocano. When I speak in te reo Māori to my nanay, she hears my lola's tongue echoed and in exchange, offers

me Visayan words that sound similar. Te reo Māori is helping me, a displaced and landless native, find homeland.

Learning te reo Māori as iwi Taketake is also part of how I support tino rangatiratanga, the self-determination of Māori people in Aotearoa. The struggle for sovereignty is not unique to my peoples, nor is it unique to iwi Māori in Aotearoa. Our languages, although different and distinct, are linked not only by whakapapa, but also by the body sovereignty they offer our people--decolonizing our thoughts, speech, actions and subsequently, our relationships. To learn te reo Māori is to honor the relationships established by tangata whenua, or people of the land, and thus create my own relationship with the whenua where I have created this thesis. By learning what I can (or am allowed) of te reo Māori and keeping it alive in my body through continued practice, I am accepting the wero put down by my kaiako: keep te reo rangatira alive and in turn, all our ancestral tongues. Te reo Māori, like the first languages of my lola/kuia/grandmother, contains kupu that remind me that trans embodiment is part of the fabric of Indigenous life. 'Ia' and 'siya' are non-gendered pronouns in te reo Māori and Tagalog (respectively) that show me we have always had more than two embodiments, roles, or genders. The lack of binary pronouns in our languages is another affirmation that a spectrum of 'genders' have always existed for our people. My fluid expression of body and roles is traditional. Reflections like this help me to return to my lola's first languages and te reo Māori continues to open me to the possibility of speaking her tongue again. I am grateful for the practice that toa Māori have offered me as I work for the liberation of myself and Indigenous trans* people everywhere.

It is with great respect and care that I weave kupu Māori throughout this thesis; consulting with my kaiako and other te reo Māori speakers about which kupu are tika and pono for this project. I know I may make mistakes and I may cause offense, as is the case when learning a new way of being. It is not my intention to cause harm or misappropriate by working with te reo Māori and I apologize if I cause any offense. I am in a constant process of feedback with my whānau Māori about language reclamation, but if you have any other critical feedback to share, questions,

concerns, or suggestions regarding this language work, please reach out to me. The reawakening of Indigenous tongues is a communal process because we cannot heal language trauma alone.

In Coastal Territories…

During a formative time in dxʷdəwʔabš land, where my ancestors' bones are buried, I participated in traditional, Indigenous ceremonial spaces to search for my Indigena roots that have been lying in waiting. In these ceremonial spaces, I rarely found an elder or a teaching that not only affirmed the existence of two-spirit/ed ancestors, but also *openly* uplifted our ever-present role in the creation of 'tradition.' Tradition, a breathing and shedding hope for balance. Or as Dame Mira Szaszy (Ngāti Kurī) describes tikanga or tradition: "Kahore te ture i hanga pērā me te kūpenga hī ika, hei here, hei pupuri, engari, pērā i te tai nekeneke, hei arahi." Her mokopuna, Kapua O'Connor (Ngāti Kurī, lives in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa-NZ, personal communication, July 2020) interpreted her kupu for me as: "Law [tikanga] is not like a fishing net, that traps and holds us, instead, it is like the moving tide, that guides us". Indigenous traditions have been sustained by the evolving spirits and bodies of the lands and waters from which we are made. The elements that give birth to our lands and waters are ever-changing energies that manifest our lands and waters as life-giving and life-taking. As descendants of these elements, humans continue to carry their transformational properties, but the expressions of such liminal power have come to be feared by humans who wish to control and subjugate our lands, waters and subsequently the people who honor these original ancestors. Two Spirit people, Irawhiti, Bakla, Fa'afafine and more embodied expressions of fluidity and transformation are human expressions and devotions of liminal, elemental ancestors.

Despite the lack of recognition or teachings that directly spoke to the existence and power of liminal beings, I often experienced many moments of trans-formational ancestors. Yet, my ceremonial

communities chose ignorance or denial of these trans elements. I was painfully aware of these beings as they were the strength that lifted my steps, despite the limits of my human body; they braced my back and guided my shoulders when I was tasked with the invisible role of both and many in ceremony. A stand-in for the women and an uncomfortable glance for the men, I continued to go where I was told or allowed, despite the splitting sensation in my na'au, mi vientre, every time I had to cross-over. Watching the grandmother pipe pass over me because I chose the men's side that day (and every day) taught me how to chew salt water until it became fresh in my throat. Being left to fan the drying buffalo tongue for the girls as they shrouded themselves in distance to receive sacred women's instruction, I learned the duet of tall grass and dusk winds in the plains of Blackfeet country. Huddled against myself, I stole one moment with the evening star to ask how they did this before. Did they also bend with isolation and a loss they couldn't name? My lover, my comrade, my twin found me there. We both cried with the realization that our transancestors did not have it any easier--the romantic paint of a pre-colonial, trans freedom quickly washed from our faces. Perhaps we have always been under this burden of bridge.*

Vignettes from my life as an Indigenous trans* person are stones in the path I have been adding to a legacy of (trans)ancestors for our descendants. Yes, trans* people have descendants and you are a descendant of a trans*ancestor. This legacy is for trans* people and all our relations, honoring our more-than-human relatives. As I continue to crawl and lay down the stones of this path, I must sit back every so often and inhale the view: study the unknown waterscape surrounding me. As I listen, intuit, touch, smell, and taste, I am not so sure that this territory is unknown, but maybe it has just been forgotten. Either way, the memory of this place was passed down to me, stored somewhere in my dream marrow, or I wouldn't have survived this far.



:: curling forward ::

It is time to weave something to leave behind, something to pad the weary bodies of those to follow, something to link their dreams to mine so that we may communicate, and we may all find each other again. I'm not yet a weaver, so this may be rough or lack refinement, but it will still coax rest, creativity, and endurance for the journey home. To honor the stories shared by liminal beings within this thesis, it is time to prepare ourselves to pause, look and listen.

Preparing to Listen, Preparing to Dance

As part of this creative practice, I need your full presence and participation as a listener and witness to effectively push and pull the boundaries of this thesis. Are you ready to listen? What does it mean to listen with your full body? As Indigenous Studies scholar, Jo-Ann Q'um Q'um Xiiem (2020) reminded participants in an Indigenous storywork panel that I attended: we must prepare ourselves to listen, to be listeners, to take up the responsibility of receiving a story. What must we do to be fully present and ready to listen? What is expected of us once we have received a story? As you ready yourself to continue listening, I have a kete of tools for you to open and touch--they will help to guide your participation and provide a space for you to reflect. This thesis, along with any knowledge offered through the trans*ancestors present, is not to be consumed, but rather, to be experienced.

Nau mai, let us open the kete in front of you. What have I hidden in there for you?

- ◊ Soundscapes: an auditory exploration and expression of major concepts that I present in this project. A playlist of soundscapes (Trans* Storywork: Sound Keys) contains pieces that are meant to undermine and accentuate the written word; to return our attention to our oral traditions as primary sources and protected Indigenous technology. Tracks from these playlists are embedded throughout the text (small bone icons) and are meant to be heard in tandem with the reading. Please use headphones to listen while reading and click the tracks as they appear in the text to create the soundtrack for this thesis.
- ◊ Movement: instructions to take a break from the page and to notice where and how your body is existing as you experience this project. Another playlist (Trans* Storywork: Guided Practice) contains reminders to physically engage decolonial practice. Again, these tracks are embedded in the text (small bone icons) and will offer you guidance for an embodied approach to reading, listening, and learning. Please click and follow them as they arise to create breaks from the screen and the written word.
- ◊ Poetry (Xochitlahtolli): my first written language, the place to which I return when all else fails me. These excerpts are meant to offer another bridge for connection, for experiencing that which I cannot teach. Some concepts must be felt to be understood and poetry is my favorite form of creating common space among disparate entities. These poems are a chance for you, the reader/listener/dancer, to time and space travel to play with the theories, methodologies, data, or challenges presented.
- ◊ Enacted Ritual: the pattern or the weave of which you are already a part, just by entering this thesis. These patterns will begin to emerge with the use of other tools in this kete, but you can also view photos, footage, and testimonio of the rituals created to harvest stories at the website that accompanies this text (Listening at Dawn: A Visual Artifact) Through ritual embodiment, I have re-imagined and remembered how to research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008).

All these tools are a part of communicating a creative process and offering a chance to create understandings within your own realm; create connections or highlight differences from your ecosystem and cosmology. Please engage them widely, return to them and play with placement. As you read or listen, you may want to return to a link from a different chapter and play with the juxtaposition of movements. Accidental coincidences can be very rewarding and open portals to meanings that even I cannot predict. Assist the oracle to unfold.

Oracle? Yes, oracle. This thesis is also an oracle of sorts, as all liminal places, spaces and movements have the potential to foretell or reflect clarity that we may unwittingly seek. I will speak more to these aspects of my research in Movment Duha (2), but for now, recognize the labor of arriving, of listening that you offer in exchange for time with a prophetic collective. We are the Liminoid. We are the People of the Middle. We are Native, we are Trans*, we are the connection under and within--a mycelium of spirit.

Dreaming While'Trans'

This dream pad is also a time capsule of body, a collection of knowing, observations, conversations, practices, and connections that reflect of trans*formational beings. In the struggle against cultural amnesia and epistemicide, I search for places where elemental and phenomenological ancestors/relatives demonstrate border-crossings, blend roles and bodies, birth regardless of form or position. This pursuit of decolonizing gender and body in Indigenous practices of creation and traditional knowledge intersects with the epistemologies carried within the spirits and experiences of Indigi-Trans* people. Although identifying trans* specific knowledge within Indigenous epistemologies may be fraught with colonial division of community members (into competing categories of oppression), I believe it is necessary to name that Indigenous practices of knowledge traditions contain Trans* epistemologies. Therefore, to be Indigenous is to honor Trans-ness and to be Trans is to embody an original knowledge.

Trans* people exist, have always existed, and will continue to exist within and outside of Indigenous traditions. We continue to step forward and articulate the knowledge we have

inherited, co-created and store for future generations of Indigi-Trans* people and our relatives. To avoid romanticising and essentializing what it is to be an Indigi-Trans* person, I will speak from my own experience as an Indigi-Trans* person and what I have observed and shared with other Indigi-Trans* and gender-diverse people. I also honor that I am a connector of multiple realms, regardless of my embodiment as a trans* person. I have met many other liminal workers, or people who work along thresholds of spirit/energy, who happen to be gender-diverse, although we understand it is no coincidence that we live a trans* or fluid embodiment of interdimensional exchange every day. Walking and rolling through the streets while trans* is not an easy dance and we are privileged with the skill to navigate all the borders that we continue to cross just by existing in the face of colonial empire. Thus, this dream pad is an offering not only of rest, but re-charge. A charge to all who pause here for contemplation, direction, and sustenance: go within and find your dance of liberation, your ritual of refusal, for this movement towards global Indigenous liberation has many eyes (‘ewalu maru) and needs all of them to be open, alert and ‘seeing’. Like the cats that use our fences as highways at night, let us find our border-weaving dance and let the re-unification of our families begin. Now we will turn to an overview of the movements within this thesis that take us through a journey of reclaiming our power as Indigi-Trans* creators.

Overview of Movements

As a creative practitioner, I seek to put theory into practice at every stage of research, thus this decolonial project of embodied knowledge through enacted ritual has taken an ancient, amorphous form. The creative process and representation cannot be separated from this thesis if I am to stay true to the decolonial project, so this text will transform and morph before your eyes and in your heart as you continue to move through the pages. Linear shapes and time have colonized my sense of time and space, so I have created this thesis in movements (‘chapters’) that can be perceived in any place or time. Listening and reading the movements in numerical order or at random will give different perspectives, so please enter through any window or door that attracts you. It may prove frustrating for Eurocentric-trained academics to read as we have been directed to translate our knowledge into arguments and evidence (where do healing

technologies enter such a battlefield?). We produce such 'knowledge' for consumption by other colonized bodies who continue to use the "master's tools" to "dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984). Activist-scholar, Sarah Hunt (2014) (Kwakwaka'wakw – Kwagu'ł, Dzawada'enuxw, Ukrainian, English) speaks to the discomfort of engaging with Indigenous ontologies for non-Indigenous people, urging them to 'grapple' with the processes of Indigenous knowledge that are "productively confusing" and embrace the "...shifting relationality, complexity and circularity of Indigenous knowledge as productive and necessary" (p. 28). The disorientation offered in these pages is a process of re-wiring, establishing new pathways for receiving and digesting information with our entire being. To connect, despite the chaos of reorganization, I have created a map or template of what is to come. I encourage you to go to the movements that draw you first or even start from the "end" and work your way backwards. The movements are sometimes numbered in Cebuano/Bisaya, my lola's native tongue so that I can keep practicing what little tongue I have. If I could present this thesis in a circular pattern, or even in a suspended mobile above our heads, this would probably be the most appropriate shape. So have a play, experiment with how and when you move through this thesis. Let it speak to you in ways that are as unique as you are, that are unique as your mountain, your river, your meadow, your ocean.

Movement Usa ("Kei Kōnei Ahau") is the "You Are Here" dot on the map. In this movement, I have been sharing my position as a fluid being--a trans*, landless native who is floating in diaspora, tethered by a liminal body that expresses many forms, roles and desires mirrored in my elemental lineage. I have touched what it means to be at once Indigenous and in diaspora. Is this truly possible to be in diaspora if we know our bodies, which is to say we can contact our lands/waters at any given moment? The experience of being native and foreign, simultaneously, is then tied into my commitment to work with kupu Māori as Iwi Taketake--creating a relationship with the whenua through our original languages. Because language is a form of creating relationships through articulation (T. Satow, personal communication, May 2020), I am driven to create relationships with external (land/water) and internal (flesh/bone) bodies through creative practice. Creative practice research does require some flexibility of mind and expectations, so I have provided you with some guidance for participation and listening in this project. It is my

hope that these notes prepare you to release the colonial confines that keep Indigenous scholarship 'safe.' I am not doing this work to be safe, because this is never a real option for my ancestors or trans*people. I am doing this work to be vulnerable and honor what we've lost and still retain. So be soft with me and enter here, there, and anywhere that needs witnessing.

Movement Duha ("Magkakaugnay") is a passageway, a hallway of sorts, into the connective tissue of this project. Here, we explore a few human traditions of understanding and describing the liminal including Te Kore (Māori), Vā (Samoan), Ma (Japanese), and Nepantla (Mayan). I also work with the liminoid as the *potential* to be in any place or form (Turner, 1982), tying this into Black, Trans* feminist practices of fugitivity and rights of refusal (Spillers, 1987; Gumbs, 2016; Green, 2017). By working with critical Black/Trans* feminist, Xicana and Mestizaje frameworks of liminality, I construct my land and water-based reflection of what scholar, poet and filmmaker, Kai M. Green (2017) has termed: Trans* methods and Trans* epistemologies (p. 444). I push past the confines of the English language, in which a majority of trans* scholarship has been created and I land in Indigenous (specifically Māori, Xicana and Visayan) languages to reframe trans* methods from an Indigenist, land and water perspective. When the land speaks our names, we are undeniably present. The epistemologies that weave this chapter illuminate origins, often murky with infinite potential, and help us to remember fluidity as part of our elemental blueprint, passed down from a long lineage of marine ancestors (Gumbs, 2020).

I draw upon these liminal understandings to invite in an oracle aspect of this research--welcoming the uncertainty and unknown as guiding forces for an improvisational process of creative practice. The enacted rituals that unfolded during this project highlighted this oracle quality of the work, which created the foundation for my creative practice research. Although the creative methodologies will be outlined more in the third chapter, I introduce it here because they are what make the theory possible. They bring form to the formless. It is through my movement practices that I have been able to synthesize and understand the web that holds trans* scholarship and theory. As mentioned in the kete above, sound pieces are embedded in the text (small bone icons). Please click on and activate these small sound keys presented for a deeper

listening practice. By creating another layer of sensory knowledge, these keys are extensions of a contemporary practice with oral traditions that keep our elemental genealogies alive and accessible.

Movement Tulo (La Llorona / La Corona: Pandemic Methodologies) is perhaps the door that is hidden in plain sight. Shortly after beginning my PhD, the Covid-19 pandemic started to sweep the world, drastically shifting my approach to research while initiating me into a deeper level of understanding grief on a collective scale. This renewed relationship with grief on a global level, pushed me into a liminal space (physically as well as spiritually, due to lockdowns and quarantine) that gave me a different lens for the role of creative practice research. Here, I look at how the pandemic created new paths of movement between and through space that was taken away from my Indigenous communities. For many of us, accessing our lands was already impossible, but the pandemic brought the grief from this reality to a deeper place–forcing us to move inward to access our lands and waters. These paths sparked adaptation where I created online co-research rituals complemented by in-person 'fruiting rituals' and performance. I connect these 'pandemic methodologies' to my skills and lineage as a landless native, refocusing creative practice from a diasporic perspective. I recognize my position as a descendant of natives who migrated from homelands or were dispossessed within their own lands, all of whom assimilated into the American experiment (brown, 2020) of racist, capitalist empire. From this position, I speak to my experience of witnessing the pandemic in the U.S., from Aotearoa, at a distance--giving me the space to recognize the collective grief ritual that is systematically repressed. My own grief as a witness unable to return to the soil where I was born, allowed me to better understand rage and grief as activators of liminal movement.

Movement Upat ("Bayanihan") is a gathering place, where the unexpected beauty of being landless is shared and reflected with community, including more-than-human relations. Here, I share the abundance found within the presence and the absence felt by my co-researchers and storytellers during our rituals. Similar reflections were felt among my artistic collaborators during our fruiting rituals with land, water and other transitional spaces or times. Internal and external

land-waterscapes continued to challenge the colonizing effects of identity and affirmed our intuitive intelligence, or the discernment that lives in our organs, bones, and skin. I, along with the co-researchers, have long subscribed to trans* identities and the distinction it creates from a harmful hegemony, but our co-research returned us to a formless state grounded in elemental whakapapa that reminded us of our place in the collective, especially the Indigenous collective. This 'data analysis' is a tapestry of sound, movement, and poetry necessary to communicate a collaboration of dreams, land, threads, and water. The communal strength needed to lift and move a lineage of grief and rage is just one layer in the genealogy of fugitive and liminal power.

Movement Lima ("Transness can only create Aliveness") is the skylight, or perhaps just the expansive view of the sky after the house returns to the earth. Here, a piece of our foundation is revealed and reflected (as above, so below). Moving out of meditations on grief and rage as powerful composters, this chapter draws into the stars, our tīpuna, for relational orientations to trans* experience and power. Having listened to the lands and waters of gender-diverse people in the previous chapter, I ask you to bring one key teaching into your own body of knowledge: to be trans *is* to be sovereign. In other words, to be trans is to be free, yet in reciprocal relationship. By moving beyond identities that were created in response to erasure, I review the places and processes that reflect trans* embodiment (another form of sovereignty) in my cosmos. This location of ancestry that demonstrates the *potential* to shift is part of a decolonial project (Smith, L.T., 2021) that returns trans* and gender-sacred people to our relationships, as opposed to our silos. "You cannot locate any star in isolation" (R. Mātāmua, lives in Kirikirioa, Aotearoa-NZ, personal correspondence, June 2019), thus I highlight the constellations and relationships that assist in finding our place of balance as Indigi-Trans* people. This chapter is for Indigi-Trans* people to draw sustenance and aro-ha as we face a plethora of barriers to our existence. Whether it is at the hands of transphobic relatives or our own, trans*people of all origins continue to face high mortality rates and shorter life spans due to hate-crimes, suicide, inaccessible healthcare, and economic violence. For our non-trans relatives who learn these constellations alongside us, this chapter is a guide to supporting the "thrivance" (Nelson, 2008) of trans* and whānau irawhiti by breathing life into our roles through creation stories and

genealogies. Trans* people generate life, wherever we grow and if our Indigenous communities are to out-live colonial agendas entrenched in binaries, we must teach our children how to care for the spaces and beings in-between.

Movement Unom ("Mokohuruhuru / Glowing Grandchild") is a path around this whare, bahay, or dwelling. From this path, we can observe all the portals and consider how the knowledge gathered here can support future (a meeting of past and present) Indigenist scholars to nourish traditions in our research. I spend time considering the freedom found through limitations to my research and the new skills that come from re-focusing the scope of my thesis. As I review the knowledge found through the co-research and fruiting rituals, I ask Indigenist scholars to "shift with the tide," (Szaszy, 1987), or practice the fluidity necessary to support vibrant, living traditions instead of brittle, stagnant remnants. I equate Indigi-Trans* embodiment with 'traditional' because our expression of potential and fluidity are reflections of the elements that give life to all beings on earth. Indigenist scholars and practitioners must recognize our interdependence with trans* and gender diverse liberation because our shared genealogy of elemental ancestors give way to our intertwined futures--infinite and expansive as our bodies. This chapter presents a wero, or challenge for practitioners and scholars, alike, to allow the power of trans* refusal and genesis to guide our work/play to unexpected places and understandings. When we refuse containment, what are we keeping alive and possible? The sound and movement pieces hidden in this movement also offer choreography for closing or pausing, especially after such a purposefully disorienting journey. Feel free to return to the sound and movement prompts in this chapter at any point during your exploration of this whare. Sometimes it's helpful to know that we will emerge alive, perhaps even more whole (albeit a little lost) as we continue an alchemical transformation.

Body Practice (Small Dance):



Now that you've looked through the door, let us pause and make an offering to ourselves and the opportunity to connect. Wherever you are, change your position: from sitting to standing, standing to sitting, sitting to lying down, lying down to sitting. If you feel able to, close your eyes

or lower your gaze and notice the ground below you. Notice how you are making contact with the ground and listen through these points of your body. What is the quality of contact? Can you feel both sides of your sits-bones on the ground or chair? Can you feel some parts of your back or elbows contacting the ground more than other parts? Is there a shift in weight distribution through your feet as you stand 'still'? Continue to listen to your body's 'stillness' and notice in what ways you (your body) are actually moving. It could be a gentle sway of the spine or perhaps it is the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe. How does this movement connect with the movement of the ground below you? Can you feel the earth moving as it slowly turns on its axis? What if you could? Begin to connect the slow movement of what we perceive to be 'unmoving' (the ground) to the slow movement of your 'still' body. Is there a duet that emerges here? Take the small movements you are detecting and over time, begin to play with exaggerating these movements. It doesn't have to look any way or express anything, simply pick an aspect of the movement and make it a little bigger. Your sway could cover a larger circumference, your ribs could rise higher. Perhaps your chin rises or tucks a little deeper. Keep exploring these small movements and allow them to create a small dance. If you want to add a little flourish or gesture with any part of your body, decorating these movements of 'stillness,' go for it. Allow your small dance with the earth to unfold. Keep playing with this small dance for as long as you can, allowing it to reach a natural peak before beginning to bring it back in. Return to the first movements you noticed in this observation of your and the earth's 'stillness.' Loop these smaller movements for a few more rounds and then come out of this practice. Drink some water, shake it out, eat a snack and go outside if you aren't already. Allow this small dance to give you another filament of interconnectivity with the in-between.

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It is our hope that you have been broken away from the expectation of a colonial thesis where Western research practices, structures of thought and purpose (to argue and dominate) are assumed the norm. We hope that you are now preparing for a creation-centered style of free-flow writing and sensorial engagement for experimentation and losing our way (Akomolafe, 2021). Experience is the greatest teacher, and it is our goal to bring you through a felt-story that

echoes my learning as an Indigi-Trans* person. Indigi-Trans* epistemologies are the knowing that can only be experienced at the intersections–the spaces between identities created in response to colonial devastation, the spaces that remind us that we are not separate from one another or our cosmos. Thus, our power as liminal workers is essential to the Indigenous collective as we continue to grow, return, and resist.

Magkakaugnay: Intra-Weaving

Movement Duha (Two) brings us into my dance with theory, which is inextricable from methodology, epistemology, or ontology from an Indigenous research perspective. As a creative native and practice-based researcher, I will not uphold the illusion of theory as separate from methodology and instead embrace ritual as an example of the theory-methodology-theory loop (one is always flowing into the other). I embrace theoretical windows as explorations that continue to bring me closer to the methodological aspects of this research (detailed in Movement Tulo/Three). To allow ritual to show us a creative research paradigm where theory comes from practice, I have mapped this 'theory' exploration over the steps I follow to create rituals and ceremonies. These steps allow me to search, problematize, listen, and eventually abandon theories that do not embody Indigi-Trans* experience. The exploration morphs into a refusal of disembodied theory, thus offering us another way of encountering theory as a cycle, or compass that orients the rest of this project.

To create a ritual or ceremony, I follow these steps (or ingredients as they do not always move sequentially):



- ◊ *Im-pulse*, usually comosological, sometimes human, that seeks a response
- ◊ *Listening* to the network (of impulse), gathering information about the source through observation of environment and relationships
- ◊ *Permission* to respond, which is sometimes denied, thus creating a refusal
- ◊ *Preparation* of tools and techniques necessary for grounding or facilitation of ritual, i.e. making taonga
- ◊ *Devotion* through clearing and cleaning (physically and energetically) the space for ritual; implores affirmation from space to enact ritual
- ◊ *Becoming* a channel for ritual, which often requires a state of 'unbecoming' or surrendering a sense of identity/ego/control

- ◊ *Connect* the chaos of creation, the impossibility of improvisation, and realms that seek each other through liminal integration
- ◊ *Observe Change* in the body of land, water or collective that is present to ritual–this tells us if our response to the impulse was received or enough
- ◊ *Clear* the space of any residue or undissolved energy that needs to be gathered and composted; the cosmological recycling process demonstrated by Tlazolteotl, the Mexica embodiment of (re)birth
- ◊ *Eat, Rest, Reflect* the teachings gained through the ceremony–giving them space to reverberate, disturb, reset, and nourish our bodies (on all levels)

Using these steps of my ceremonial process, we will visit perspectives from Indigenous, Black, Trans*, and Xicana feminisms, grounded in the bodies (lands) of my creative and scholarly predecessors. Beginning to frame a theory, or cycle, to guide this work, we will move into select liminal spaces including Vā, Ma, Te Kōre, and Nepantla. All these liminal traditions affirm the dance necessary to flesh ritual (an iteration of theory in practice) from a more embodied space, pushing me into "the Coatlicue State" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 68); the internal and subconscious space of unknown from which transformation is generated. It is within this state of darkness that I allow myself to become lost and find the edges of a subterranean space–the place where survival necessitates a surreal power that crosses dimensions and cannot be contained by any human limitation. By tapping into elemental power, we emerge into a rite of refusal. Rising from this time with the unknown, I arrive at a compass of creative practice as my theory and methodology.

Ritual Ingredients

Im-pulse

As a creative practitioner embarking on a co-research project regarding the liminal powers of Indigi-Trans* communities, I received the call to embody decolonial theory and methodology through sound, movement, and poetry to reach beyond the confines of academia. I use the term,

"co-research" to refer to the collaborative research that created this project—a collaboration with anitos, ancestors, elementals, and my whānau. When I speak or write, more than one being is always communicating. Beginning my re-search for reflections of Indigi-Trans* power long before I entered the academy, I have spent most of my life learning rituals (songs, dances, altar-building, etc.) that only reveal their purpose, or theory, through the repetition of process– the growth and connections that result from practice. Therefore, it is not enough to understand concepts with only our mind (that little home of the individual), but we must feel and experience concepts with our whole body (the expansive hub of the collective) if we are to truly engage in a decolonial project (Smith, L.T., 2021). Creating research that is felt by readers/witnesses is about decomposing barriers to scholarship for practitioners, the constant generators of 'theory through hands.' By creating theory through our hands, we are also honoring a principle of accessibility for our communities that birth, nourish and bury us regardless of what institutions believe or value our work. Barriers to embodied connection and reflection within mainstream academia have also come to drive this search for theories that combine Indigenous Knowledge (IK) with creative practice.

I have become quite intimate with the barriers of theory–the shortcomings of theory that leave the bridge just a little too short to reach the body. To reach new realms for communication, I cannot theorize my way there. I must *practice*, even if imperfect or incomplete in its construction, to train a route to my creative research. As my Butoh instructor, Minako Seki (2020), reminded me: the Ayurvedic tradition of medicine and healing could not develop without the practice of yoga or the repetition of movements and bodily awareness. It is not enough to just have the knowledge (in this case the breath or awareness from yoga), we must also have the wisdom (Ayurvedic observations) to discern and create theory from it. The knowledge gained from practice (enacted ritual) is not enough to guide others who seek liminal strategies for freedom, but through the cycle of theory, I want to mark a story that leads others to their own fertile relationship with the unknown.

As I turn to the theories that guided me into my own awakening of a body that is racialized, (mis)gendered, and put into a menagerie of classifications that seek to objectify me, I feel the 'problem' of theory arise. The problem lies in the fragmented reflections as I scour sources from Indigenous Studies, Critical Black Feminisms, Transgender Studies, Queer Indigenous Studies and more. The problem also lies in the paradox of naming experience and thus identifying my body in any form, finding a simultaneously individualized and collectivized place. As bell hooks (1995) warns us of the danger of identity politics, she states that "...too much narrow essentialist value / placed on direct experience / denies the realm of magic, of mysticism" (p. 29). Cherishing the magic that blesses me as a trans* person, I am in search of theories that are present in my movements, not just the identities I am expected to host. Where is my practice reflected in the theoretical realms of Indigenous, Black, Xicané, Queer or Trans studies? Or perhaps more specifically, where is my embodied theory being danced in these realms of scholarship, research, and activism? I do not use dance as a metaphor; I am in search of scholars who dance when asked a question by deconstructors and who creatively refuse to be completely known and therefore vulnerable to commodification. Yoruban author, teacher and 'trans-public intellectual,' Bayo Akomolafe (2021) warns activists and scholars alike of the trappings of being recognized by the state or any entity that seeks to control power. Akomolafe instead uplifts the power of the unrecognizable, the unseen–often our orishas, anitus or atua who stole away with our native bodies when we were taken or forced to leave our homelands. These forces continue to manifest and inspire liberatory practice, resisting narrow definitions of power. As a 'glitch' (Russell, 2020) in the system, my native and trans* being resists being known, not by choice, but purely by divine design. I cannot fully function or perform within a system that fails me (Russell, 2020, p. 20), even when I have trained every limb to conform. My Indigi-Trans* body cannot lie and will always betray my decolonial purpose. The next time we are on a panel as intellectuals and scholars, tucking our bodies into acceptable shapes and volumes for an academy, who among us will care for ourselves by fully inhabiting our body?

To be decolonial in every step, I must push past Western traditions of theory, which are often experienced as a mental landscape, originating from, and limited to the head or another

residence of the ego and individual. How does theory live and breathe in the arms? The guts? The pelvis? The heels? The vertebrae? German Butoh dancer and phenomenology scholar, Sondra Fraleigh (2010), had to look to the body to weave past the limitations of Western frameworks as she sought understandings that are quite foundational to Indigenous epistemologies. To flesh the foundations for phenomenology, or a relational ontology of body, self, and world (a concept of interdependence that non-Indigenous scholars of her field worked extensively to articulate), Fraleigh was compelled to return to the body: her body. She observes, "Soma as body, whether animate or sleepy, is always with us, humming along unnoticed. We can coax it to attention, however, through mindful use of motility and with sensibility and perception as partners" (p. 34). By partnering with her body, Fraleigh was able to understand that "Living beings are in exchange: "they all share a common past"" (Margulis and Sagan 1995, p. 4, as cited in Fraleigh, 2010, p. 22). Like many white and Eurocentric scholars (in experience and theory), Fraleigh had to continue beyond her body and look to non-Western traditions to understand what knowledge she was uncovering in the body, hence her extensive study with Japanese Butoh originators. Indigenous peoples, Indigenous bodies have always held that the body-spirit is a network of knowledge that is answering to the "intimacy of the cosmos" (N. Murphy, personal communication, May 2021), yet we have been subjected to "...the regime that tells us that we have no memory, recollection, or belief system to connect us to those healing traditions" (Page, 2020). It is through embodied practice and listening that we can regain the theory lying dormant just deep to our lungs, just inside the mitochondria of our cells, and just a moment longer in that reoccurring dream.

"Our history is not written in books, but in our mats."

-Queen Sālote

Listening

To bring form to the theory lying just beneath, I listen. I listen to where I am drawn, what or who presents themselves and when. I listen to my body's response as I encounter more traditions of the unknown and liminal. Vā, Ma, Te Kore, and Nepantla whisper to me from different parts of the ocean, creating an intersection of frequencies that buzz with the fertility of nothingness,

spaciousness, formlessness, and relationships. Directing my eighth sense, I focus my attention on the Samoan concept of Vā, which can be described as "...essentially kinetic, a transactional field of space open to negotiation between things and/or entities framed within its permeable boundaries" (Gabbard, 2018, p. 34). Resonating with the "dynamics of mutability" (Gabbard, 2018, p. 34) characteristic of the space-time continuum, vā is also "...not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together" (Wendt, 2017 as cited in Gabbard, 2018, p. 35). Although vā can be understood in a variety of Samoan contexts and applications, I am interested in these foundational observations of vā because they describe a kind of home that I experience when I return to my body–the deserts that hold memory of an ocean or sleeping volcanoes that hold fresh water underground. As I listen to these composites of elements within and around my human body, I notice the internal space without which there would be no form.

I can see her movements in my mind's eye:
her hand and even part of her forearm has disappeared
into the hollowed vessel of uku
she continues to scoop, push, and pull
"It's all about the internal space,"
she nods to me with a wink as she continues to
grunt, scoop, push, pull
I had watched her spend so much time shaping the outer form
but I didn't see this spark in her eye until she plunged herself inside
eager to expand and grow her creation, she changed direction
"Yup, all about the internal space!"

This memory of watching a master uku artist create attention to the internal space increased my awareness of between space (vā). I could not see or hold the uku form that she later presented to me without remembering the internal space that caused it to grow, expand and stabilize. Although I could not see the internal space in the vessel's final form, I could feel and touch its presence through the lightness of structure and blossoming curves. Having witnessed the

hollowing ritual, I understood how it was able to stand and hold oppositional forces simultaneously. I was particularly fascinated by this step of creation because I recognized the relational or vā space that is ever-present in my process as a ritual artist. This internal space exists within my own awareness as a mover, but also between myself and the entities who are witnessing or participating–creating a tapu structure of ritual. The intuitive strength of this internal space that demonstrates the synergy of opposites is also captured by the Japanese concept of ma.

Ma (間) is the Japanese concept of what is intentionally incomprehensible, but nonetheless a permeating energy in Japanese creative practice. Interviewed by Nguyen (2020), Japanese graphic designer, Sugiura, clarifies the etymology of ma (間), telling us that it is made of two elements: "the enclosing character 門, which means "opening" or "gate," and the inner character 日, signifying "sun." The two elements together, 間, suggest a light shining through an opening, which can be actualized in different ways" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 76). The space between is again seen in this concept of ma as it is often associated with ambiguity as well as the emptiness that is once again, dynamic. Similar to how vā is found in the Samoan language, ma is also found in combination with other words to create a variety of meanings such as ""pause" [間, ma] in the noh performance; "interval" in the words kūkan [空間, space] and jikan [時間, time]; and "time span" in the word jinkan [人間, human realm]" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 73). All these permutations of ma show us that this intervening space, connecting the outside with the inside, is necessary for creating concepts that describe temporal and therefore, cosmological relationships. Although ma may seem clear in its function of dynamic emptiness, it still escapes human comprehension from a conscious level. The inability to be fully comprehended is what draws me to ma, affirming the theories of refusal and felt sense that emerge from my rituals. Sugiura explains, "Ma is the space where you see what you cannot see, and you hear what you cannot hear. We should see the light that cannot be seen. If we try to theorize or analyze *ma,* it will run away" (Nguyen, 2020,

p. 79). This surrender to the formless qualities of energetics such as ma is why I question theory, but moreover, theorizing as a method of research in liminal territories. How do I translate ritual realms of the in-between towards a theoretical understanding? Whose theoretical understanding? Even if I could create a translation, would this be ethical, given the co-option of Indigenous knowledge and technologies that follows our trails?

Sit in the uncertainty,
pause and extend a bit longer in the discomfort of the stretch,
the unknowing.
Listen for twice as long,
nevermind the people staring at us standing in the middle of the sidewalk.
How dare we pause, how dare we appear empty and unmoving,
how dare we stop to connect, interruptions abound.
Slipping in all directions of space and time, I look to ancestors
and embody the movements of vā and ma, I listen for
Te Kore.

"From this still, empty space of sacred potential and emptiness was birthed the energy of life, its pulsing unconscious desire and purpose expanding out of Te Kore the potential to birth creation of… " (Livermore, 2016, p. 57-58).

Māori accounts of creation and cosmological understanding include a whakapapa of sound, movement, and elemental (un)folding that move in and out of states that are mimicked by human genesis, birth, growth, and death. Te Kore is one stage of this cycle, this energetic exchange, where all potential is held in a formless and therefore form-full moment (Nepia 2012, Jahnke 2006). There is no gender to this fertile space, all is possible and waiting. Te Kore is often associated with darkness, that kind of bright night that we experience in the womb, near the ocean floor or in the farthest reaches of outer space. The expansiveness of this state is what nurtures the infinite direction, shape, purpose, and void (Nepia, 2012, p. 108). All exists here in

Te Kore, which is perhaps why this place can incite terror as well as awe in human descendants. I first learned about Te Kore in Aoteroa's creative spaces as many Māori and Pasifika artists are endlessly inspired by the possibilities of Te Kore. Visual artist and scholar, Robert Jahnke (Ngāi Taharora/Ngāti Porou) presents space-time continuum aspects of Te Kore in *Whenua Kore* (2019) through neon light and mirror work. As the witness/participant moves around the work, circular neon rings bend and stretch away from view much like a wormhole into an abyss. When I viewed this work at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi ō Tāmaki, I saw myself in the center of this wormhole because it used a mirror to create the infinite effect. I, as any other viewer, was implicated in this eternal cycle of light and dark, causing me to wonder at myself as a being of infinite time and space. As other viewers took a turn to peer into the center of *Whenua Kore*, they were each confronted with their own likeness in the center of this portal, reminding me that we are all iterations of this endless origin. Jahnke's meditation on *Whenua Kore* is also discussed by Carl Mika (2021) (Tuhourangi, Ngati Whanaunga), who urges us to remember that Te Kore is "...not simply a deceased relative, an ancient ancestor who happened to leave a legacy of light. It lives on independently and fundamentally as a ground that founds the existence of all things..." (p. 2). Because Te Kore infuses everything, they demand contemplation and as I've witnessed, they also demand ritual engagement for those who wish to breach the limits of human perception.

I've danced and shouted as Te Kore cat-walked the runway, wearing the bodies of takatāpui and Pasifika Indigiqueers who brought all their whānau to invoke their beloved elemental ancestor/descendant to the ballroom (FAFSWAG Legacy Vogue Ball, 2021). Many takatāpui and Pasifika Indigiqueers find resonance and reflections in Te Kore, the endless realm of possibility from which all manifestations emerge. Te Kore gives Indigiqueers a clear place of origin in creation stories that are otherwise retold in ways that disappear the gender-ful, the gender-less, the multiplicity of form that is present in all elemental ancestors and manifest in their earth-bound descendants. The all-encompassing nature of Te Kore as a necessary stage and place which will birth Te Ao, the world of light, brings me back to the stage of unconsciousness or subconsciousness. In Azteca cosmology, the duality of sub/consciousness is reflected in the relationship between creative forces, Tezcalipoca and Queztalcoatl. Although there are many

variations of Tezcalipoca and Queztalcoatl, they parallel the subconscious and conscious states of being (respectively); creating the universe through their dualities. Manifesting on a human level, they usher us across an ancestral dialogue of dreaming in waking life. All these amorphous places of birth and exchange are articulated by our Indigenous cosmologies in the ever-expanding energies of our universe.



stop. listen.
Is there an internal space
floating just behind your eyes?
Is there an internal space held just behind your sternum?
How are these two spaces connected?
Do you notice a slight tug or push
when you dip your forehead
or lift to look at the light?
where are you right now? who are you right now?

In pausing, I notice a labyrinth of emptiness, spaces between, infinite possibility and the almost-articulation of conscious with subconscious worlds. As a cyclical creator, I remember preparation for a research ceremony much like Coyolxauhqui, the Nahuatl manifestation of the moon. Coyolxauhqui's name comes from the Nahautl words: coyolli (a long, yellow palm leaf used to create altars) and xahua (to dig or pick). These meanings coupled with Coyolxauhqui's role as the moon highlight their cyclical nature and importance of preparation. I have been in a process of gathering ceremonial flowers analogous to the cycles necessary to prepare for birth or life (Luna & Galeana 2016, p. 12) by crossing theoretical threads to create a strong altar to hold Indigi-Trans* life and wisdom. Come back from Coyolxauhqui's glowing face above us and notice the silver desert reflecting their light below.

In the wake of liminal theories, we are now within the deserts of Nepantla, a warm spot to rest and take in the beauty of loss, formation, and dissolving borders. Nepantla, a place crossed and

re-visited by many Xicané artists, writers, and scholars as they struggle to make sense of "...the liminalities of postcontact Indigenous societies" (Miner, 2014, p. 167), is where I sit to listen to vā, ma, and Te Kōre. A Nahuatl word for the in-between state, "...that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another" (Miner, 2014, p. 167), Nepantla is where I return as a Xicano trans* person, as a Xicano artist crossing Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa from Aotearoa to Turtle Island. This space, again dynamic and alive with uncertainty is my ancestors' fractal of vā, ma and Te Kōre, where creative forces meet and align for those willing to be present to the discomfort, the unsettling of knowledge or destination. Xicana writer and scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa reminds me of conocimiento as "an embodied form of spiritual and political knowledge" (Miner, 2014, p. 167), a way of being that I find alive and evolving in Nepantla. Anzaldúa (2002) urges me:

> those carrying conocimiento refuse to accept spirituality as a devalued form of knowledge, and instead elevate it to the same level occupied by science and rationality. A form of spiritual inquiry, conocimiento is reached via creative acts—writing, art-making, dancing, healing, teaching, meditation, and spiritual activism. (p. 67)

Within Nepantla, I dwell, creating the rituals necessary to retrieve knowledge and technologies that I was told did not exist or was lost. Trusting the altar I have prepared with my tīpuna, I let go of theory that was constructed and imposed by settler-colonizer bodies and I surrender to the awakening of practice within this fertile emptiness, this thread of vā, this glimpse of ma and another inhale of Te Kore.

Permission

As I listen to the liminal traditions above, the embodied knowledge of my foremothers illuminates and I am aware of the permission to respond, to create. Indigenous, Black and other women of color in Turtle Island have been challenging theory and specifically theory production within a Western academic framework for many decades. It is from the authors of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* that I received permission to turn to my body for theory; reframing an otherwise colonizing approach to generating theory. They taught me that

“A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives--our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings--all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Moraga & Anzaldua 1983, p. 23). By returning to our lived experiences, imprinted in our bodies, unlocked through somatic practices (i.e., dance, labor, dreaming), we give theory a new portal for expression. Samoan author and art critic, Lana Lopesi (2021) acknowledges the inextricable link between body and sovereignty for Indigenous women and people across the gender spectrum, “...thus sovereign bodies are part of a vital resistance to settler colonialism and its logics” (p. 70). The theory we embody as Indigi-Trans* people, as bakla, takatāpui, or non-binary people exists beyond resistance to empire and will never cease to create liberatory practice. Kreiger (2005, as cited in Fernandez et al, p. 3) claims that embodiment can refer to how “societal and ecological circumstances become biologically incorporated and can manifest in health outcomes across generations,” thus I am interested in what gifts we have embodied and can encode into our descendants for their thrivance (Nelson, 2008). Reclaiming theory as a tool of liberation, not dehumanization (a common experience of research for many Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples), greatly impacts our embodiment and what ancestral knowledge can emerge from our bodies. “This is how our theory develops,” Chrystos writes in *This Bridge*, “We are interested in pursuing a society that uses flesh and blood experiences to concretize a vision that can begin to heal our “wounded knee”” (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983, p. 23).

More than the theory itself, I am relieved by my predecessors’ method of locating and creating theory from their bodies and spirits, which are systematically denied by Eurocentric, white-supremacist, racist and American institutions of knowledge. Such denial reminds me of our power, the kind that incites erasure or other silencing measures from hegemony. Our power is potential–to be anything and anywhere at any given moment. This unpredictable potential draws me closer to possibilities that come from our elemental ancestors who exist far before and beyond human understanding or limitation. The liminal powers of elemental ancestors push me to seek theory, or an articulation of process and ritual, in traditions that work past conscious, “flesh and blood experiences” (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983, p. 23) and into the subconscious depths of human expression. These expressions live deep within and beyond our bodies;

memories of the void, the between, the processes of becoming or un-becoming. Many Indigenous traditions reflect on these relational spaces such as Samoan concepts of Vā (Gabbard 2018, Hau'ofa 2008, Tuagalu 2008) Japanese articulations of Ma (Nguyen, 2020), Māori whakapapa of Te Kore (Nepia 2012, Jahnke 2006, Livermore 2016), and Xicano visions of Nepantla (Anzaldua 1987, Miner 2014). I can no longer cleave to the theories of flesh as articulated by my women of color forebears. I must trace movements that preceded our need to make visible the invisible (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983, p. 40) and find sustenance in the discomfort of the formless, once again. What did we know, what were we capable of, what were we certain of before we separated into human possibilities? Revisiting our memories of the elemental state is a necessary pause before re-forming, re-shaping and ultimately, re-framing a new body from which to generate a 'knew' layer of theory.

Preparation

"...I passed between two fangs,
the flickering of tongue.
Having come through the mouth of the serpent,
swallowed,
I found myself suddenly in the dark,
sliding down a smooth wet surface
down down into an ever darker darkness.
Having crossed the portal, the raised hinged mouth,
having entered the serpent's belly,
now there was no looking back, no going back" (Anzaldua 1987, p. 56).

Peeling back the illusion of theory, I prepare myself to receive the tools necessary for creating this ritual to unearth a compass for this work. I have abandoned the theory pressed upon me, pressed into me, the theory that still presses me back and away from myself, from telling you or anyone the story of an impossible moment. When one became two, three and even ten impossibilities, then just one again. I release my grip on a hope of learning how to master the default and win a space to be understood, not just heard. I get up from the floor, because there was no seat at the table, and walk out the door, down the stairs and out the double doors. I am

outside. Outside the building, the expectation, the stagnation of theory that cannot breach stone walls. Dancing on the steps, swinging off the gates, I remember what the land looked like before and after these brick and concrete bodies. From this vision, I shape a new place from which to be seen and understood. "An audience of the dead…" (Wasasala, 2019) answers my refusal, my call. By getting up and leaving the building, the institution, I physically refuse to be a host for theory that does not come from my land, my body.

This refusal causes an interruption in the room of complacency, and I (along with anyone else nearby) am pushed into a moment of dissonance. The movements that disrupt the complacency of life, propelling the soul to increase consciousness of the self, are part of the coatlicue state (Anzaldua, 1987), a liminal process necessary for uncovering Indigi-Trans* theory. Slipping into the underground of my body, I enter the coatlicue state as I accept that the creation process is a form of death. The death of all theory that has held my tongue, the death of all forms that created safety through limits–this thesis is a decomposition of the known so that we may reach an unknown place, again. Looking to Coyoxauhqui, their body collected in the moon, I trust in the cyclical as I plunge down into the comforting darkness, spine following in one fluid motion.

> Does she go under? I don't know. I see her drift, and I sense the potential of her crossing over. Most of all, I appreciate her surrender to the unknown outcome--the body that becomes its own unknown future--and trust. (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 49).

In my search for practice that generates theory to bridge the gaps, I found a point of entry through Butoh, a dance form that originates in post-WWII Japan. Butoh offers many embodied practices to listen to the 'audience of the dead' ignored by eurocentric theories. Japanese Butoh teacher and choreographer, Ohno (2010, as cited in Fraleigh, 2010, p. 2-3) states, "When I dance, I carry all the dead with me." This acceptance of the inherited energy inside each body reminds me of the dynamism of our deceased continuing a liminal life through our living cells. As I abandon theory and push into the mud of my coatlicue state, I contact each bone and the regenesis they carry. A "co-presence", or co-authorship between the living and the dead through practices of ancestral communication (Benjamin, 2018, p. 46), emerges as I move with my body

through Butoh practice and dance. Butoh encourages the dancer to surrender through a loss of ego, identity, and agenda, and become an organism of complete listening–a channel. Listening and seeing with every part of the body is at once overwhelming (the moment before flow) and aligning. The sensitivity required to listen with my elbow, a toe, and my hips, simultaneously in different directions, is a skill that takes cultivation and surrender. Although I may not feel all these parts of my body-land, the practice of sending my awareness into these spaces increases my energetic field, or connective capacity. There is an element of concentration and relaxation that seems paradoxical but creates the tensegrity necessary to hold doors open for ancestral communication.

I turn to Butoh, among other listening practices, to tune myself as an instrument, a channel for information from within my body and my environment or place. Through this art form of emptiness and intuitive movement, I receive a steady stream of information that is at once micro and macro. By following our intuition, the knowledge embedded in our bodies, Butoh dancers often tell stories through reactions and responses to an internal world. Lana Lopesi, looks to Hawaiian scholar-activist, Manulani Aluli Meyer, to affirm deep listening and feeling as important sites of knowledge. Lopesi (2021) sits with Meyer's observations of the body as "…the *central* space in which knowing is embedded' because 'our body invigorates knowing'. Not separating our 'thinking body' from our 'feeling mind', Meyer articulates a kind of intelligence in feeling" (p. 9). Butoh practices bring the intelligence from the feeling body, a largely internal experience, to the surface for witnesses to behold. As channels, we direct their attention and facilitate an experience of the invisible landscapes within and around us.

Choreographing a dance of the between opens infinite possibilities–the space between two dots (or two hands) can be divided forever as no point will ever touch another. Choreography embodies the theorizing process, learning and unfolding steps creates an awareness of space that "...renders boundaries, pathways, layers and relationships which were not there before the initial act" (Munoz, 2015, p. 62). The possibilities made available by choreography gives us unlimited language access to the worlds within or between. Given an infinite palette of

communication, ancestral knowledge can and does inevitably express or reveal itself. Within the coatlicue state, accessing this palette is crucial to the search for theory that bridges states which refuse to be named, categorized, or recognized (Akomolafe, 2021). I work through movement such as Butoh to reflect the poetry and sonic landscapes that I maintain to veil the exact shape or location of our trans*ancestral knowledge. The precision of ritual, a multidisciplinary offering, seeks to create an experience and elicit a connection among witnesses and participants, replacing recognition with resonance.

Still sorting flesh from bone, I understand the coatlicue state as an interruption of certainty, or unsettling that is the theory, itself. This moment of displacement from time or place pushes me to seek beyond the human perspective and is related to all the moments of transformation in my lineage. Coatlicue, a serpent, sheds underground and it is from this process of transformation that I understand an iteration of trans* theory and subsequently, trans* method (Green & Bey, 2017), one that is grounded in Indigenous epistemologies of liminality. Green's proposition of a 'trans* method' asks us to listen for the gaps and pauses to bring a "critical presence" (Green & Bey, 2017, 444) to these spaces to locate the missing, paralleling a Butoh practice of dancing the 'between.' As a ritual practitioner, I am constantly constructing with the gaps and nuance: the indication of something beyond what I can perceive. By bringing a critical presence to the spaces between, without any hope of conclusivity, I find alter/native channels of elemental and ancestral communication from within the coatlicue state. No answer or definition is to be found and harvested here. Just an ever-lasting moment that will continue despite our (un)awareness.

Devotion

Another step to gain permission into a realm of inter-dimensional and cross-temporal exchange, is the preparation of a space and thus, ourselves. This space could be within or externalized through cleaning, rearranging, and securing an area for ritual work. Even when we receive permission to enter or continue our ritual work, there is still more to be offered in exchange for the contact or knowledge we seek. Our labor or our discomfort, the kind that results from being

so close to the unknown, is often exacted as the energetic opening necessary for ancestral and elemental connection.

> From an Indigenous perspective, ceremonies often include some element of sacrifice or hardship in order to ask for and receive knowledge or spiritual cleansing. Approaching discomfort through the lens of ceremony as a meaningful sacrifice…[gave] meaning to the discomfort… (Fernandez et al., 2021, p. 25)

This excerpt above refers to observations made during a journey made by a group of Native women who re-walked the Trail of Tears to understand the power of connecting body to place and the legacy of their ancestors' resilience. The physical experience of walking the trail brought them closer to the wisdom of refusal that their ancestors impressed upon the earth during their forced removal. Beyond the hirstorical trauma that was addressed during this ceremony of re-walking the Trail of Tears, this group of Native women (re)connected to their bodies through a cycle of "...(a) discomfort, disequilibrium, and doubt; (b) breaking down; and (c) breaking through" (Fernandez et al, 2021, p. 24). They broke through the dominant trauma narrative that enshrouds so many of our removal histories to find the strength and visions of health that our ancestors held. The sacrifice required to gain access to these deeper ancestral practices and understandings is also how the women of this walk were able to develop a new relationship with their embodied wisdom.

I continue to prepare my awareness by clearing my body as a patch of earth for ritual, shedding ego through practices like Butoh, poetry or sonic improvisation. A network of energetics and exchange is revealed when I release the dead brush of identities that have collected in my crevices. Without the identities or experiences that come to define me, where and how is theory formed? As a channel for the dead, the more-than-human, and the monstrous–what theory is there to be found? 'I' am still present as a receptor, but I move apart and widen to be a vessel. Not a vessel for all, but a vessel created by the ancestors who dream the power of the between.



Now, go outside.

Doesn't matter if it's raining, just go

find a tree or a patch of soil or a drop of water
that seeks to touch you, too.
Listen, here, through this touch
restore touch, touch of peace,
consensual touch, touch without touching
power of the tongue-less see or feel
hear or taste
know what they know,
what we know
Mycelium of Creation
drawing into ourselves a contraction
for reassurance before the expansion
of (r)evolution.
Be moved or Be still, just listen.
return to this page, return to us when you are ready.

I find theory in the soil caked on the soles of my feet after dancing. I find theory in the opaque groove of a smokey quartz. I find theory in the turquoise light as I dive into Waikaremoana. I find theory in the underground and underwater–the places where all our bones congregate with mycelium, roots, and passageways of whales or ants. In the tradition of my lola (grandmother), I develop a devotion, or pledge of faith to these subterranean and subaqueous spaces. During my time as a danzante, stomping prayers into the earth for days, I saw glimpses of Tlazolteotl, or "She who generates and transforms that which has completed its normal cycle" (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 94). A subterranean theory-body, Tlazolteotl is found in Mesoamerican cosmology, specifically throughout Azteca, Nahuatl and Mexica codices. Parteria and scholar, Gonzalez (2012) remembers her teacher's definition of Tlazolteotl:

> Ramirez-Oropeza explains (2000,2001) that Tlazolteotl has two manifestations based on either waste or love: Tlazohteotl from *Tlazolli* (waste) *tetl* (stone) *ollin* (movement) or Tlazohteotl from *Tlazohtla* (love) *tetl* (stone) *ollin* (movement).

> Oral tradition held by Ramirez defines *Teotl* as stone movement, referring to the duality of life; and it is another way of recognizing a sacred energy or process. Both manifestations--and the actions contained or signified within her name--result in the ultimate act of regeneration and cycles of creation. (p. 98)

Tlazolteotl is a dual force, or in my understanding a multiple force, symbolized by a 'female' aspect wearing a maxtla (an Azteca garment worn by 'masculine' roles and warriors) while birthing a new human. Tlazolteotl's mouth is often depicted as open and smeared with ochre, alluding to their role as a decomposer, transforming waste into nourishment. The cycle of birthing from death as embodied by Tlazolteotl is the place where I come to rest and offer my body of knowledge for connection to the anitos and atua.

Becoming to Connect

To protect the strategies of the dying/(un)becoming for those upon the threshold, we release our comfort, safety, even security in this moment to contact the unknown with both hands. Give us all your hands and we will pull you up into the suspension before the fall, before the plunge into all that terrifies the mystics into recession. There are no conclusions to be drawn as the field is ever-expanding and contracting, but we can facilitate an experience for you. The experience is the story, the theory, and the methodology. The experience is the data and the analysis. The experience is the inconclusive finale, the pause on a journey of embodiment that we wish for you to continue. In the meantime, we cannot tell you what only you can acquire along the journey of this story. Unique as your ancestors, the knowledge drawn to your body is not something even we can predict. This is the beauty of the maneuvers we invent to commune with freedom dreams–the possibility that begs creativity from our bodies– that extend from our great(est) grandmothers all the way to us. Black Feminist scholar, Hortense Spillers (2007) remembers her experience of the liminal in a conversation with Hartman et al (2007):

> And so I was trying to ask the question again, ask it anew, as if it had not been asked before, because the language of the historian was not telling me what I needed to know. Which is, what is it like in the interstitial spaces where you fall

> between everyone who has a name, a category, a sponsor, an agenda, spokespersons, people looking out for them–but you don't have anybody. (p. 308)

The interstitial spaces that link the 'un-' to the 'recognizable' as referenced above by Spillers is the site of this ritual. Because Indigi-Trans* people are a glitch, "work[ing] toward fantastic failure, breaking free of an understanding of gender as something stationary" (Russell, 2020, as cited in Lopesi, 2021, p. 72), we reside outside and between moments or places of legibility and categorization, thus forfeiting access granted to legible bodies. Glitch feminism (Russell 2020) is "…deeply rooted in body sovereignty…consider[ing] the in-between as a core component of survival" (Lopesi, 2021, p. 72). Akin to the sudden change and ensuing confusion that is characteristic of a glitch's movement, we switch, duck, and feign to enter this realm of interstitial knowledge that is foundational to Indigi-Trans* power. To confuse captors that trail us (remember 'walking while trans,' commodification of our resistance movements, the origin of Native status cards), I am intentionally circular, creating slippery edges that reflect the fugitive strategies of Black, Native, and Trans* ancestors. As I release my search for theory that reflects my experience of an interstitial state, the works of Black Trans Feminist scholars spill into my awareness and offer another inhale before I plunge back under to continue assembling an Indigi-Trans* compass.

The legacies of Black feminist fugitivity (Hartman et al 2007, Gumbs 2016, Campt 2017) that draw upon the power to 'take flight' as demonstrated by enslaved African (Indigenous) ancestors, continue to shape a lineage of refusals, fugitivity and hope that culminate in Black Trans Feminism (Green 2017, Ellison 2019, Bey 2022). In their recent monograph entitled, *Black Trans Feminism*, Black Feminist scholar, Marquis Bey passes through an intersectional critique of theories that cannot remain separate and whole. They write, ""Black" and "trans" will, or at least ought to, inflect feminism; "black" and "feminist" will, or at least ought to, inflect transness; "trans" and "feminist" will, or at least ought to, inflect blackness" (Bey, 2022, p. 8). I resonate with the relational aspect that Bey highlights as they bring together Black, feminist and trans scholarship not just into conversation, but into an awareness of a shared body. Bey also shows us how transness relates to blackness through its "...*movement* away from an imposed starting

point to an undisclosed (non)destination…emblematiz[ing] abolitionist gender radicality" (Bey, 2022, p. 11), building a platform for us to understand the cohabitation of blackness and transness. The nexus of black and trans urges us to be "...more reliant on escape from categorization, escape from normative conceptions of who we are permitted to be" (Bey, 2022, p. 13). Just as Bey declares that blackness is a trans matter and transness is "a fundamentally black praxis" (Bey, 2022, p. 13), I echo the elemental beings who remind us that transness is found in the land, water, and therefore Indigenous ontologies. The relational awareness revealed by fugitive pathways is also taught to us by the convergence of elements such as tidal zones, who cannot exist without the movements of many.

Abolitionist and decolonial scholar, Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) re-members the fugitive movements of Black and Native ancestors in their book, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Building their work at the shoals, the ecotonal location where two distinct ecological zones meet in an uncategorizable dance, King uplifts the power of Black abolition and Native decolonization to disrupt "...normative processes of white human self-actualization" (King, 2019, p. xv). King looks to shoals as sites of interruption and ever-changing states from which we can draw reflections for our own fugitive movements as abolitionist and decolonial creators. They observe: "As an in-between, ecotonal, unexpected, and shifting space, the shoal requires new footing, different chords of embodied rhythms, and new conceptual tools to navigate its terrain" (King, 2019, p. 4). By understanding the movement required to navigate liminal spaces such as shoals, King is listening to the teachings stored within elemental relationships regarding freedom through liminality. They apply these teachings to an understanding of Black abolition and Native decolonization as exercises in our elemental rights– a place of fluidity and power that precedes and resists any binary. King (2019) continues to observe the rising and falling of tides, receiving shoals as:

> ...an interstitial and emerging space of becoming: rather, than forming a boundary between land and water, shoals are spaces of contact, friction, and interaction among land and water (framed above, of course by another space of contact: air or atmo-sphere). (p. 3-4)

The encounters that unfold between each wave and section of shore continue to change each other and in turn, the formation of a shoal (the product of a relationship among elements). By slowing down to learn from elemental relationships that eternally co-create liminal states, King reconnects us to our birthright of fluidity and all the powers contained therein as Black and Indigenous people.

a thin line of light connects my typing hand to the window behind me
pungawerewere (spider) is diving seen diving off the corner of this table
all eight limbs thrown back, poised for possibility
they teach me the joy of suspension, the art of letting go
trusting the beginning of a web to lead us home

Working directly with embodied legacies of Black fugitivity, alexis pauline gumbs (2016) and M. Nourbese Philip (2012) demonstrate the importance of channeling as a response within interstitial realms. In gumbs' *Spill* and Philip's *Zong!* these writers co-author with their ancestors (direct and adjacent) who survived enslavement in the U.S., whether through refusals or flight. *Spill* was born out of gumbs' attention to Hortense Spillers' *way* of speaking about race, gender, and capitalism; opening doors for the "…nameless women in unknown places who were laughing and looking sideways at each other in a world that couldn't understand them" (Gumbs, 2016, p. xi). *Zong!* is a book length poem composed entirely of words from the case report, Gregson vs. Gilbert, regarding the murder of (Indigenous) Africans aboard a slave ship at the end of the eighteenth century. Both writers/channels worked directly with unseen ancestors who reverberate through and between hirstorical archives, giving us another example of relational inquiry that is reflective of the interdependence that creates shoals or other ecotonal locations. Feeding each other, changing each other with each passing movement (in this case, word), both the writer/channel and the ancestors engaged are co-creating an interstitial space of freedom. Together, they break silence and erasure, but legible only to those who are ready and equipped to listen—those who are willing to accept the responsibility of

hearing stories of (spiritual) refusals and the futures they generate. Together, all these Black, Trans, and feminist scholars remind me that my embodied refusal is the legacy of ancestors who could not forget their practices, prayers, and freedom.

Often, my body refuses to be. Refuses to be known, to be controlled, to be acceptable. I experience this refusal in layers: my trans body threatens institutional binaries, my anywhere-dancing confuses mundane spaces and brings attention to the sacred, and my reo disintegrates spatial-temporal boundaries. The refusal that comes from my body / movement / sound is at once arousing, confusing, and attentive. These qualities push open the door for further possibilities, the kind of creation that is the opposite of (hirstorical) trauma. The creativity born out of practice is at once a tool of survival and thrivance (Nelson, 2008), used by many of our ancestors as they continue to seek connection.

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Observe Change

I'm walking home, surprised at how much longer it takes without a bicycle, but enchanted by all that I see because I'm moving at a slower pace. As I walk concrete, I gaze out upon the clouds from this bridge and now the next bridge. Longing to join the clouds, I sing. I sing songs to them, taonga I brought back from Aotearoa as I "low-ride across Aztlán", (Miner, 2014, p. 3) and Ixachilan (Turtle Island). I am granted permission to glide with them and remember what they see as I'm transported back to Aotearoa, the island of the long white cloud. I can smell the ngāhere and hear the tui's intergalactic beatboxing. I can feel their ua pata pata, mist clinging to my eyelashes, guided by the scent of kōrari and koromiko. As I sing, I begin to remember the

mahi-ā-ringa, hand movements, to accompany the waiata. Walking and marking the dance, I can see all my hoa and whānau dancing around me. I begin to see the Seattle streets crossing back into my vision and I know that I am still in Coast Salish lands, on the west coast of Turtle Island. A small cloud remembering lands held within Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, I float on sound and movement. It's ok to be in both worlds at this moment for they are one, separated by the limits of my human body and mind. Through sound and movement, I can fold these borders as my embodied memory brings distant shores closer. I am one body of memory, like the earth holding two hemispheres–let my brain connect the two halves and talk story once again. I am moving theory, bringing the intuitive to the logical, and here to tell the story. Dancer and healer, Cathy Livermore (2016) (Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Kai Tahu) observes:

> If we return again to our creation story, we see that it is first movement, as stirrings, and then sound, created through the building of consciousness birthing sound/Te Whe, that has been the active forces creatively manipulating, affecting, manifesting and transforming the universe. (p. 60)

This recognition of sound and movement as an originating practice leads many cultural practitioners to the understanding that song, chant, and dance are all ways of relating, and even returning energy to our sources of life.

When I visited my hoa at Mauna a'Wakea to support the protection of their land-ancestor in early 2020, I had the honor of participating in a morning hula workshop. As we sat before the kumu, our bodies flush with the heat of memory after practice, he remembered his tutu's words: "Song and dance are all we can offer back without taking more" (tutu conversations, Mauna a'Wakea, personal correspondence, January 2020). The energy we generate by moving and making sound does not require any resources from the earth or anyone else; we simply create these expressions to share and release back. Livermore (2016) sees song and dance as a way to relate with our ancestral rituals and protocols because such movement and sound are "...also connecting activators carrying and awakening our shared human memory and histories into the present" (p. 60). Movement, chant, and song are tools that transmit, direct, harness, translate, and transform (Livermore, 2016, p. 60) – they can be used to facilitate and actualize futures by awakening

information stored in our cells. Just as intergenerational and historical trauma (Walters et al, 2020) is passed down through our cellular memory and stored in our bodies, so too are our ancestral practices of celebrating, healing, and creating. If we can become aware of the historical trauma stored, then what else can we access? How can we become not only aware of the full breadth of our ancestral inheritance (our power), but also know how to properly steward it? In addition to connecting all creation and growth, "Movement and sound are the raw, original states of energetic potencies and active forces / that enliven / relational spaces from which / all possibilities are / birthed" (Livermore, 2016, p. 60). Thus, ritual and ceremony, based in movement in sound, can help us to decipher the information we unearth in our Indigi-Trans* bodies. Re-ceremonializing (Gonzalez, 2012) our bodies resists the systematic separation from practice that colonization has sown. With the grief and joy of realizing what traditions we have been forced to forget, I move into the practices that tell me the story of my creation, of Indigi-Trans* origins. I take the practices of ritual and ceremony towards creative co-research with elementals which embody trans* wisdom and roles. It is through the exchange of enacted ritual that I can move and practice Indigenous epistemologies of liminality so that I may contact the interstitial knowledge that refuses to be understood or theorized.

Releasing disembodied theory and centering intuitive knowledge, I turn to creative practice for methodologies of research. Intuitive intelligence (Gillin et al, 2006), the embodied knowledge that is carried by each person often contradicts the demands of capitalism (collective knowledge/care undermines productivity driven by individual gain) and thus has been dismissed by colonial projects as illegitimate. The 'logical' aspect of our brain or 'normal awareness' is over-emphasized at the expense of our intuition, or the "...process by which information normally outside of cognitive processes is sensed and perceived in the body and mind as certainty of knowledge or feeling about the totality of a thing distant or yet to happen" (Gillin et al, 2006, p. 3). Creative expression, felt sense, and other unquantifiable skills are seen as lower forms of thought, perpetuated by other (trans)misogynist, anti-Native, and ableist systems. It is through the act of storytelling (Lee, 2009; Smith et al., 2019) that the intuitive and logical parts of the colonized mind are reunited in a healing partnership. The sacred act of storytelling is precisely

where I land as a creative research practitioner. Indigenous technologies such as storytelling create foundations for Indigenous research that exists through reciprocal relationship (Wilson, 2008), thus refusing colonizing methodologies of extractive research.

Indigenous Knowledge & Kaupapa Māori-informed Research

As an Indigenous artist and co-researcher, I have often taken Indigenous Knowledge (IK) for granted as it permeates all the ways I engage my creative practice. Cajete (2014, as cited in Walters et al, 2020) outlines Indigenous Knowledge as:

> *traditional knowledge* which is handed down and based on stories and experiences of a people through time; (2) *empirical knowledge* that is gained through careful observation and practice over time; (3) *revealed knowledge* which is gained through vision, ritual, and ceremony; and, (4) *contemporary knowledge* gained through contemporary experience and problem solving. (p. 56)

IK informs all my work and play throughout this project, being a blueprint for how I relate to embodied knowledge from a decolonial or restorative (Jackson, 2021) lens. The combination of traditional, empirical, revealed, and contemporary knowledge finds rest within embodied knowledge. The body houses all the memory and future generated by IK and is creatively accessed from my trans* experience of embodiment. I came to understand this intersection of IK and Trans* Embodied Knowledge during my time in Aotearoa, sitting with Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine scholars. The definition above comes from scholar-bodies that are mostly made of Turtle Island soil and memory. Thus, as a child of the moana, I turn to Māori perspectives to help me deepen my understanding of Indigenous creative research.

Creative praxis, informed by a Kaupapa Māori Research approach in addition to the land-based epistemologies of Xicané, Black and other Indigenous scholars, is the puna or well-spring of my research methodologies. Where theory has failed me, practice has renewed me and in turn, showed me other forms of theory that lay waiting inside my body. Kaupapa Māori (KM) Research is an indigenous cultural framework that comes directly from Māori principles and relationships

with whenua or land. KM is undertaken by, with and for Māori, or tangata whenua, whānau, hapu and iwi (Smith, L.T., 2015). Because KM is based in knowledge, protocols and values that come from Te Ao Māori, an indigenous cosmology that is deeply connected to land and water of Aotearoa, this research framework will inherently decolonize or restore relationships (Jackson 2021) wherever it is applied. A KM approach to theory challenges Pākehā (European, foreigner) notions of theory in their construction, definition, selection, interpretation, and application (Smith, L.T., 1997 as cited in Campbell, 2019, p. 32). By moving towards research as a cyclical process that is fluid and cumulative (Campbell, 2019, p. 34), I am returning to a ritual of theory that is in alignment with Kaupapa Māori praxis (Smith, G.H., 2002). This cyclical movement of theory, into method, gathering, analysis, interpretation and so forth, through non-linear and linear directions, places research in a state of "...becoming, and at times it is also a state of unknowing…" (Campbell, 2019, p. 34). By moving towards this fluid state of unknowing, the space between form and formless–Indigenist and Kaupapa Māori-informed researchers (Pihama 2001; Smith, G.H. 2002; Smith, L.T. 2021) are in an ever-present state of Vā, Ma, Te Kore and Nepantla. Centering the cyclical nature of research is also what gives me permission to listen more deeply to my creative practice as a map for theory and methodology. When I trace the creative Indigenous research path (Te Kanawa, 2022), I refuse Pākehā constructions of theory and method that were born out of research traditions that seek to define, categorize, subjugate, and consequently exploit or destroy Indigenous communities (including our more-than-human relatives). As KM and Mana Wāhine scholar, Leonie Pihama writes, "It [KM] asserts that we have always been researchers, have always engaged in theorizing our lives, our experiences, our context" (Pihama, 2001, p. 111).

As an Indigi-Trans* researcher in Aotearoa, I have been informed by KM and particularly the paths created by Mana Wahine scholarship. Mana Wahine (Pihama et al., 2019; Kahukiwa, 2018; Murphy, 2017; Simmonds, 2009; Yates-Smith, 1998) theory is a decolonial form of analysis that is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of wāhine Māori, providing a place for wāhine Māori to reclaim their place within Te Ao Māori while further defining an Indigenous women's analysis of the impact of colonization in Aotearoa (Pihama 2020, p. 358). Because Mana Wahine

theory is based in tikanga, mātauranga, and te reo Māori, it is a simultaneous movement of reclaiming place and land. At its center, Mana Wahine theory is a "…resurgence and reaffirmation of the mana of Māori women, past, present and future" (Pihama 2020, p. 361). I found my roots seeking Mana Wahine theory before I was even conscious of our shared experiences as Indigenous people of sacred genders that have been denied our place in our traditional cosmologies via Christian, colonial whitewashing. Mana Wahine theory pertains to wāhine, not only the colonial concept of 'women,' meaning it is grounded in an understanding of embodiment that is uniquely Māori before being interpreted into English. "There are many times and spaces Māori women move through, in our lives, Wāhine is one of those. There are others. There are varying terms that relate to times in our lives and relationships. From birth we journey through those spaces (Pihama, 261-262)" (Simmonds 2011, p. 12). The fluidity and expansion named in this understanding of wāhine is the trans* mycelium that connects Mana Wahine theory to Indigiqueer experiences. This definition "…recognises and provides for an in-betweenness and enables the explorations of diverse Māori realities from a position of power rather than having to talk back" (Simmonds 2011, p. 11). Indigi-Trans* theory (methodology) emerges from a place of liminal power housed in our ancestral bodies.

An Indigi-Trans* theory is based in the interstitial space recognized by KM and Mana Wahine approaches alike, reflected in the physical body and experiences of Indigi-Trans* people which are as varied as our landscapes. Meyer writes about body as a central space of knowing where the 'thinking body' cannot be separated from the 'feeling mind,' thus articulating an intuitive intelligence (Lopesi, 2021, p. 9). Meyer (2008, as cited in Lopesi, 2021, p. 9) speaks to the "…intelligence in feeling and feeling in intelligence" that dissolves the isolation of ego. Bodies, as demonstrated by Mana Wahine and Indigenous, Black, Trans feminist theories, are always generating theory, thus theory is "…anything but disembodied" (Haraway, 1992 as cited in Spry, 2016, p. 60). To write and create theory from the body, especially bodies that pulse with mycelial connections across many borders, is to write from "…*the entanglements of copresence*" (Spry, 2016, p. 61) that create an interstitial state. Enacted ritual, or patterns that open liminal contact, is how I choose to enter the between spaces of Indigi-Trans* embodiment and theory.

Enacted ritual gives me a practical lens through which to reflect upon the movements of searching, questioning, listening, abandoning, refusing, and dancing theory. All these movements are preparation for the ritual, they are the offerings and clearing necessary to obtain permission to proceed. The surrender induced by loss (of the known, of body/land, of direction) and expanded by the liminal movements of the subconscious is all part of entering the ritual space–or passing from noa into tapu states. With not much more than a handful of water and a mouthful of dreams, we are now ready to enter our practice: *becoming* a channel, *opening* to connect with knowledge sought through creative practice.

Creative Practice: Landing Theory

> I imagine poetry as a supernatural force. Sometimes I can contact spirits, like a chaneller. But not a very good one. Once or twice, I've been able to do it word for word. Most of the time I just get a glimmer, like a bit of silver lame projected into the air above my head. But often it's just a picture on the front basin of my skull. (Avia, 2016, p. 83)

This excerpt above from poet performer, Tusiata Avia (Samoan, Palagi), reflects my experience of poetry as a channeling technology, a process of Xochitlahtolli or the flowering word. Xochitlahtolli is used in the Nahuatl traditions of central Mexico to communicate with elemental and cosmic bodies, demonstrating another Indigenous technology of interdimensional communication that has been kept alive within our traditional arts. Xochitlahtolli is one tradition of poetry, but as a movement and sound artist, I find the action of flowering in all mediums that I craft for rituals. As with Butoh, poetry is an understanding or freedom from default understandings, allowing an infinite breadth of expression for ancestral co-authors. We often slip through to speak more directly through the hand or mouth, but sometimes we just hum behind the sternum or deep to the intestines. We have clear messages to share, but those who are in the pursuit of knowledge (i.e. scholars, academics, researchers) do not always understand, let alone respect the nature of our relationships with living research. We speak from a place of

undying, of unbecoming, of decomposition, unfurling, and unknown. We are something akin to your intuitive knowledge, your body imagination, but so vibrant that even the stranger next door cannot deny our colors, much like the dawn sky stretching away. How you choose to listen or work with our network of knowledge is up to you/us. We want you to receive what you seek because it is seeking you. The pull to touch the earth is not driven solely by a human need–you respond to the pull of the earth's desire to touch you as well (E. Cohen, personal correspondence, November 2019). Waters reach back to lick our outstretched limbs, there is no bliss greater than reunion. Elemental beings seeking each other much like our early iterations in the long night of creation.

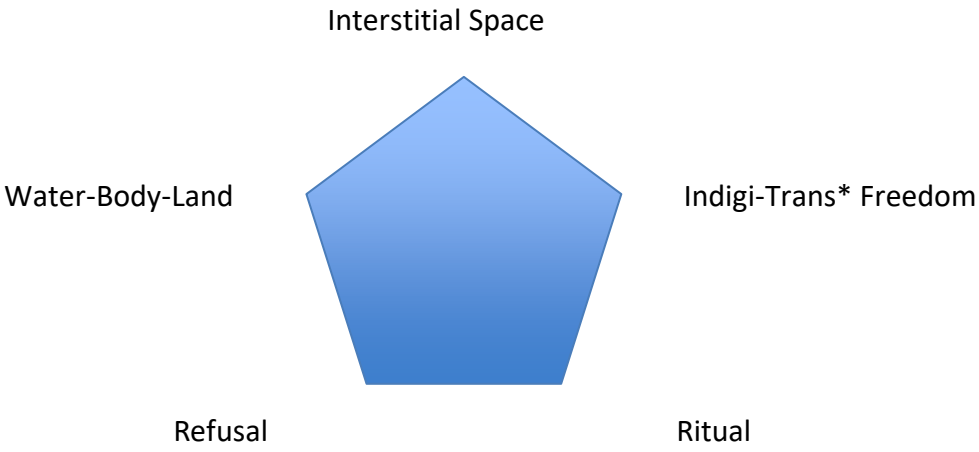
Xochitlahtolli, along with other ancient traditions of poetry, continue to touch Indigenous art and scholarship today. Dancer/activist/scholar, Ramona Beltrán (2019) (Xicana, Yaqui, Mexica), utilizes the poetic practice as a critical feminist methodology of self-reflexivity to dissolve the myth of 'neutrality' and 'universality' that creates "subjugation of other knowledge and their producers" (Rose, 1997, p. 307 as cited in Beltran, p. 145) throughout academia. Reflecting on her experience with offering poetic practice in an academic conference setting, Beltrán urges critical feminist scholars to draw upon poetic self-reflexivity as an under-utilized tool of healing, an act of resistance. Beltrán (2019) positions poetry as a tool of resistance: "Poetry can facilitate access to our embodied knowledge while we simultaneously abandon the dominant processes of meaning-making into which we have been socialized" (p. 14). Beltrán's use of poetry as self-reflexivity invokes Moraga and Anzaldúa's "theory in the flesh" (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1981; Moraga, 2015), reminding us that lived experiences, determined by intersectional realities, create bodies of knowledge that differ from and resist dominant narratives. Guided by the knowledge that "...poetry is / a form of storytelling—an essential source of Indigenous knowledge—as it educates the body, mind, heart, and spirit (Archibald, 2008)" (Beltrán, 2019, p. 146), Beltrán led a group of scholars to access processes of meaning-making that are not fostered by colonial epistemologies or methodologies. Centering art-based methodologies, Beltrán simultaneously disrupted an inherently colonial structure (academic institutional space) and invited her fellow scholars towards freedom of body (and therefore Indigenous knowledge). In

locating their positionalities through relational exercises (participants swapped poems and added to each other's writing, responding to previous lines), Beltrán's colleagues were naming their lands of origin, purpose and direction through sense-memory stored in their bodies. As participants described their memory, they described themselves and therefore their land. Land, water and the relationships between these elements and the humans they create became present through Beltrán's poetic reflexivity ritual. More-than-human voices emerge through the humans who finally break the silence, through the people who dare to be vulnerable to each other through poetry. Reflecting on the possibilities offered by creativity in academic spaces, Beltrán (2019) concludes that creative critical feminist methods are transformative in their possibilities, although still greatly lacking and need to be foregrounded and supported by future scholarship (p. 149).

Writer and academic, Billy-Ray Belcourt (2019) (Driftpile Cree Nation) discusses poetry as a site of resistance by reminding us that "Poetry is creaturely. It resists categorical capture. It is a shape-shifting defiant force in the world. Indeed, it runs counter to the world" (p. ix). Aligning with fugitive methods of research, Belcourt's understanding of poetry also echoes Akomolafe's (2021) vision of the uncategorizable nature of true power, the kind that stowed below deck with our African ancestors were enslaved and shipped across the Atlantic. Poetry's power is still underestimated by institutions even as it acts as "…a geopolitical coordinate to enact this grounding of freedom-orienting knowledge" (Belcourt, 2019, p. x). Believing in the power of poetry to "shore up a decolonial knowledge that queers and indigenizes freedom" (Belcourt, 2019, p. x), I continue to place poetry (in all its forms) as a technology of resistance and re-membering at the center of this project, guiding all the components of this exploration.

Clear

As we emerge into a clearing, pausing after this ritual search for theory, I hold a compass for us to contemplate. This compass is akin to a cycle of theory encompassing five points:



As presented in the diagram above, this compass includes Interstitial Space (Vā, Nepantla, Te Kore, Ma) as the place that I seek through Ritual (poetry, sound, movement), generated by the Water-Body-Land relationships that ground Indigi-Trans* Freedom; a direct Refusal (fugitive movements, abolitionism) of recognition and therefore capture by the settler-colonial state. This is one flow of energy through this compass, but all directions (cross, cycle, reverse, stillness) are possible to encourage flexibility and play. Return to this compass for contemplation or redirection when you find yourself questioning what you knew or who is speaking. I encourage losing your way generously (Akomolafe 2021) to contact edges of an Indigi-Trans* experience and power, but it is my hope that this compass can guide you back to a sense of purpose and home as this thesis unfolds.

Eat, Rest, Reflect

This chapter is a search for my theoretical compass as I move and push theories around, rearrange them and reflect on where they resonate with my body of knowledge. I have brought us through a process of considering theories, digesting them and allowing myself to be digested by them–reproducing a life cycle of elements (i.e. hydrocycle) where it is impossible to remain unchanged. Visiting liminal traditions, Black/Indigenous/Trans* feminisms, Kaupapa Māori theories, and embodied approaches, we emerge with a five-pointed gem for guidance. Moving through Interstitial Space to Ritual to Refusal to Indigi-Trans* Freedom to Water-Body-Land, in

whatever order or direction(s), this compass is co-created by creative practice methodologies which we will visit in Movement Tulo ("La Corona, La Llorona/Pandemic Methodologies"). Hiding in the margins or in plain sight, this chapter frames a new house of theory where Indigi-Trans* experience is present in the origins (liminal traditions) and the futures (creative practice). (Re)connected to ritual as a site of theory and method, we can continue to practice embodied listening as a channel for contacting and creating theory from our body-lands.

La Llorona, La Corona / Pandemic Methodologies

I hear her at night, that's when we're supposed to, right?
she sings with a dirt tongue, familiar but unintelligible
don't listen, don't let her voice in
that's how she enters through the window without a body
don't open your eyes, lights flickering underneath
if you get up to look, you will only see a voice.



la llorona, la malinche, la virgen
mi amigé suspects they cried prophecies in the streets
not just lament, or perhaps they are one in the same
she knew the coming of Cortéz and called her warning
weeping and wailing
sacrificing her children by interpreting
by appearing to them as Tonantzin
by refusing a colonial gender
la llorona, la malinche, la virgen
her grief our oracle
they saw the first of our pandemics to arrive

Movement Tulo (three) is where creative research is brought into an embodied exchange with the theoretical foundations built in the previous movement to germinate a methodology. This methodology has grown within a collision of the COVID-19 pandemic with the second year of my project, encouraging fluid strategies that became methods for connection such as ritual. Be prepared for a little time-travel, dear listener. The death of my lola (kuia, grandmother) during

the writing of this movement opens a mouth of grief, re-collapsing mind, spirit, and body into one. This is truly an Indigi-Trans* reality where life cannot be separated from practice, even amidst pandemic and loss of elders. The confusion, anger and gratitude precipitated by grief will continue to paint the light created by my search for methodology.

The methodology that emerges in this movement will not respond to one name and uses many shapes, thus you may need to learn other forms of recognition–feel, smell, sound. This is the art of noticing essence, of trusting your intuitive intelligence to recognize the repetition of knowledge that needs to be activated. When I found a vowel or shape that began to fit their body, they would always change depending on the time of night or angle of day. This is the comfort and the challenge of working with living, growing traditions: they refuse to be categorized, solvable, or even replicated. This methodology is at once between, thriving in the unlit spaces of separation, and underneath, drawing direction from strategies of survival practiced by my trans* and Indigena ancestors.

tāwera

kahaponanon

xolotl

meremere tū ahiahi

kabugason

tlahuizcalpantecuhtli

kōpūroa

tala

The many names rising above are inspired by the planet that we see near the horizon at dusk and dawn, heralding the sunrise or the sunset, and often characterized as the brightest star in the sky. I hope you have witnessed this morning/evening star, and if you remember their brilliance, please look for them tonight or when you wake up before your morning alarm. Sometimes I mistake them for the light of an arriving plane on the horizon because they are just so bright despite the

light of day. This daystar breaks all expectations of when and where a star or planet can be seen– continuing to shine just as our sun or moon and often suspended between the two if viewed from a clear horizon. Throughout this movement, the daystar will be observed from the lens of a rhizome, or "unexpected roots generated through alliance with the specific conditions of the environment, moving and extending in the in-between" (Roy, 2015, p. 153). The "...living system of processes" (Roy, 2015, p. 153) that create trans* rhizomes are an expression of the relationships (network) necessary to grow underground and underwater. African American Studies professor, Ruha Benjamin (2018) speaks about what it means to be subaltern as Black and Indigenous people, or to live in the underbelly:

> "Yes, subordination, subjugation, subaltern, literally "under the earth," racialized populations are buried people. But there is a lot happening underground. Not only coffins, but seeds, roots and rhizomes. And maybe even tunnels and other lines of flight to new worlds, where alternative forms of kinship have room to grown and to nourish other life forms and ways of living" (Benjamin, 2018, p. 47).

The subaltern place is one of the many positions of two-spirit/ed and trans* people, or daystars incarnate. Here, a subterranean daystar methodology is hatched. I will continue to draw on these elemental beings to tell the story of ancestral skills that illustrate this methodology. Methods of co-research and other restorative rituals will also be framed here, stepping us through a development of process. This suboceanic daystar methodology is developed from and for my two-spirit/ed and trans* communities as a toolkit for resisting "auto-genocide" (Simpson, 2017, p. 127).

Back Up, Set the Altar

Because I was unable to return to Turtle Island to facilitate my community research as planned, I leaned more into my lineage of adaptation and fluidity. To develop a methodology that would benefit my communities (now crossing through another pandemic), I brought this lineage of rere, or fluidity, and applied it through different waharoa, or portals of ritual. I learned ancestral strategies of ritual survival, first-hand, by witnessing and being challenged by my lola's Catholic faith.

As a recovering Catholic (18 years of Catholic school), I stung with resentment every time I had to attend church with my family as a young adult. Glaring up with a mixture of confusion and recognition at Black Jesus (one of the few in Seattle), I would wonder what my ancestors practiced before they were forced to build lavish cathedrals to a foreign god. I wondered why my lola had not questioned the Catholicism given to her by her mother, or why she believed these ways were superior to that of the 'mountain people' (lola's name for those who never came down from the mountain–never assimilated). Yet, my lola would share stories about how her relatives had called a hilot or mananabang to stop my lola's hemorrhaging after she gave birth to my mother.



I should have gone to church today.
my mom texts me secret photos from mass–
it is Simbang Gabi today.
yup, should've gone to church.
I wanted to stay home to write, instead.
my practice of prayer,
my worship of an unknown-all-knowing
many.
I wanted to stay home with lola:
she couldn't attend church for many months, probably even a
year before she received her last rites.

before Father Vic, the one who reminds her of Uncle Boy,

her favourite,

came to her side, anointing her brow and read from a book,

small and black

worn by constant holding.

I'll stay home with you lola,

we'll pray from home.

just like this

I light your candle, burn something fragrant

may the prayers be lifted

when our bodies could not

I chant in the language of your oppressors

which one?

I focus in the language of your heart

and I read poetry aloud

from someone I've never met,
pacing a circle in front of your altar.

your still images are slowly branded
overriding the moving ones of my memory.
perhaps I should create a new litany
reciting all of your living moments

popsicles and otterpops on the back steps
giggling at the sun
butterfly nets out of the pink plastic mesh
that wrap bihon noodles,
filing and painting your nails at the windowsill
games of solitaire on the floor
in your corner next to the heater
tuesday morning rosaries with lolo at the dining room altar
cleaning out the car mats while parked at Alki beach
dancing in the Santo Niño procession
'round the church basement

line-dancing at the Filipino community center

santanghon noodles on my birthday, ginger lurking

your lola is a holy woman,

he said

4 am

prayer bench

no doubt about it

she's powerful

saints and virgins

congregate before her

she had the ear of god, your lola

she said

black nazarene and santo niño

implore. her mercy

her prayers kept your mom and sister alive

kept all of you alive

paing, go turn out the candle

she says

did you eat…?

*

* *

*

My lola is a holy woman, that much was always clear. She called me an aswang, especially when I let my hair grow out and I would repeat her epithet back. Sometimes she called me a witch and I would laugh, replying, "well, I get it from you 'cause you're a witch too." She just laughed more and then cut me with her eyes. "Don't worry, just pray," my lola would instruct. Not sure my mom learned the first part of lola's commandment, but she does pray. My lola could almost always be found finishing up prayers like a meal. Listening to the familiar chant, I would wonder what was today's reason for the rosary? Nevermind, it's Catholic so I didn't care. What did she find in these prayers left by one of our many decimators? Replacing my genealogy with prayers that help our colonizers sleep. Didn't she know the herstory? Why had she come to accept these ways over those of our mountains, our volcanoes, our oceans? What was I unable to see.

The faces of her god(s) remained black. The pantheon that grew out of her altars celebrated many, not one. The fervor and abundance that lit her prayer bench flowed from bodies her own: molten, generative. Nothing could supplant her source. This tenacity was not foreign. She is the banka, the rice field, the mountain, the taro root. She may not remember and sometimes she does. Mostly, she remembers miracles. The miracle of surviving each day under Spanish, now Japanese and then American occupation, the miracle of crossing Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa with three children, the miracle of outliving her captors, the miracle of dancing again.

:>>><<<:

As the anniversary of my arrival in Aotearoa coincided with the first few days of lockdown, I marveled at just how little is certain or known, yet many people moved as if with very certain foresight. "God is Change," (Butler, 1993, p. 3) are the words that continued to vibrate my body as I began to adapt once again. It was time to look at what the worldwide lockdown would bring to this research, to keep dancing with the work. Growth is always happening, especially underground. As a descendant of those who witnessed the onslaught of colonization and world wars, my body knew how to keep the rituals alive.

Day 6:
Finally, this virus is our generation's transformative flame and we can't even walk through it cuz it's just lit our cities. All we can do is sit in the flame, or stand, but do not move. Stay put, stay home, stay inside, do not leave do not travel do not congregate do not visit do not touch, wear a mask, wear gloves, wash your hands, sanitize all surfaces, wash your clothes, take a shower immediately, cough into your elbow, turn around face the corner, wait in line, 6 feet apart at all times, 2 meters at all times, and keep working home-school your kids work remotely just enjoy a staycation be a couch potato watch movies hang out at home take it easy finally take a break on us go slow think about life reflect on yourself spend time with your family work on that home project that you've been putting off attend this live stream do this online workshop come to this zoom call get on tiktok don't you already have snapchat shout me out and i'll shout you out, yea?

Yea, we're fucked. We don't have the mental, scratch that, spiritual, strength for this. This is a giant time-out for all of us. A big, "go to to your room," if you even have one. What are we going to learn? Will the others ever hear what we've already learned? We've been telling them ever since we got separated, but they refuse to hear, to listen, to change.
change. god is change. (Butler, 1993)
-excerpt from my COVID-19 lockdown journals, May 2020

During the first waves of COVID-19, most of the world scrambled to create as many safety measures as possible and everything changed from the ordinary to the sacred, including our rituals, relationships, and visions. Indigenous rituals have been responding and adapting to waves of change for many generations, often going subterranean, becoming 'lost' (our tīpuna are strategic) lest we become more vulnerable to ongoing genocide and epistemicide. The act of becoming 'lost' was expressed in many ways, including a form of assimilation that combined foreign spiritualities with our own, although it often appeared as a displacement of our akua/atua/anitos with those of our colonizers. Akomolafe (2021) exalts the act of becoming lost as a necessary part of our ancestors' survival, but also our own as we resist capitalist-colonial agendas through our uncategorizable and unfound bodies.

The tension between being recognized (by colonial institutions) and being unseen is a constant flux of power where a lack of recognition can "...strip us of our power to interrogate, to intervene on, to act" (hooks, 1995, p. 134), but "...to be seen and not known is the ultimate abandonment" (hooks, 1995, p. 134). Black Feminist author, poet and cultural critic, bell hooks (1995) reminds us, "It is easy to dominate that which you see and never know. To want to know is to transgress" (p. 134). From a First Nations context where 'recognition' is something bestowed by a foreign colonial power, Glen Couthard (2007) among others argue that "...recognition, like assimilation, serves to reinforce the dominance of colonial power" (Hunt, 2013, p. 29), therefore 'recognition' is always "pre-determined by political relations" (Hunt 2013, p. 29) that validate state sovereignty. Our Black, Native trans* ancestors walked the fine line between known and unknown, seen and unseen, strategically working this tension to remain free even in captivity. I am here because of

this transformative cunning and thirst for freedom; we are here because a trans*ancestor could not refuse their ancient role as babaylan, healer and leader. Yet, "...liminal spaces of opposition are always at risk of appropriation by dominant hegemonies" (Mitchell, 1997 referenced by Hunt, 2013, p. 32) and so we draw close to the unforeseeable, the undesirable and obscene. We become everything you fear, which is to become unknown once again. We continue to practice and create, underground or overhead, learning our roles by mapping our place between star and water.

A KAPPI METHODOLOGY

I am guilty of preferring to research the old school way: asking questions
word of mouth, calling up friends to pick their brain
asking my lola for one more story when she's already time-traveling
pestering my dad in the late night kitchen
who is our deity of dawn and dusk?
do you know the name of…?
do you get any hits when you think of the morning or evening star?
Inevitably I am led back to my own body of answers,
even carved into my skin.

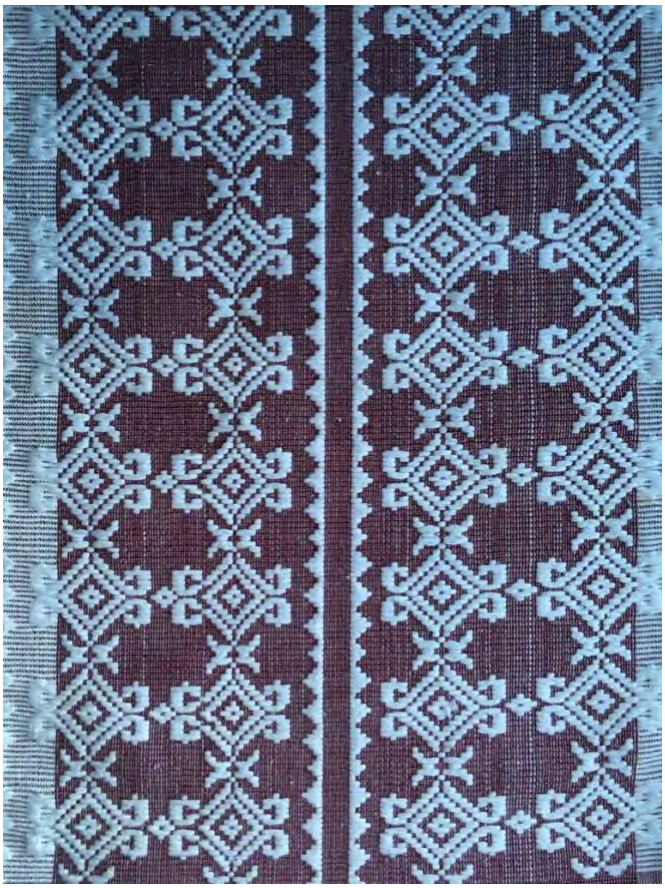


Image 1 Inabel weaving with Kappi and river motifs

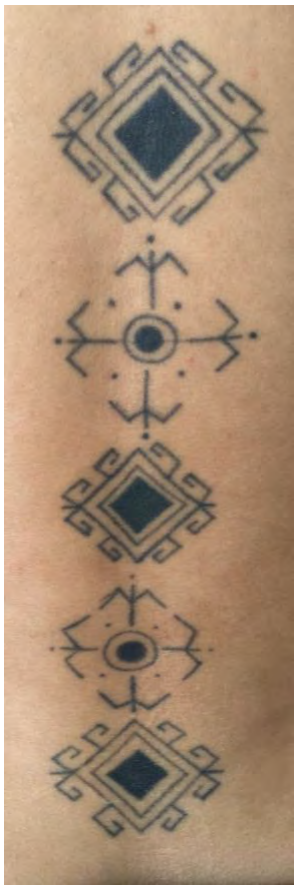


Image 2 Batok of Kappi motif

"the diamond with two concentric diamonds around it…that's the morning star"

(J. Palad-Ignacio, Ilocano, lives in O'ahu, Hawai'i, personal communication, May 2022)

The shape of the morning star lies in the center of our kappi, our (Ilocano) crab motif, which is also the creation story of Maui fishing up our islands (Maui's hook is each crab leg). As I connect this daystar with an underwater position, I read my skin and see Maui, that shapeshifter, pulling a huge fish from under the waves to become our land, our home. The morning/evening star is connected to and perhaps even of the same origin as our islands. Kei raro, kei runga.

The daystar continues to appear as land and connection. A dear friend and inspiration to me during my journey with Danza Azteca once shared a story with me about the relationship between the morning star and two-spirit people. Without sharing a story which is not mine to share and without attempting to replicate an intimate space of knowing that can only be held in

person and at a certain moment in time, I will share a small kōhatu that came from this story for two-spirit/ed and trans* people to touch.

In the transmission of our traditional ceremonies from generation to generation, under the watchful eyes or feet of our colonizers, some pieces of our stories and rituals were left silent or deactivated. One key piece that continues to remain un-activated is the power of our two-spirit/ed people, our people of the middle, our trans*formational beings. We are lucky if wāhine, babae or mujeres are named and uplifted in ceremonies now. 'Men,' likened to tane, lalake and hombres, are still the default human center of our ceremonies. When both are named and uplifted, some may feel a sense of fairness, especially in resistance to colonial-patriarchy, but never do we experience a sense of peace or wholeness. These two genders or embodiments may create an illusion of balance, but without the presence of two-spirit/ed and trans* people, there will not be harmonious cycles.

The story that I will not tell you encapsulates this lesson and sealed it with a quiet moment at dawn where a two-spirit mujeres were blessing ceremonial water, offering wai to the first light as instructed by elders. As they quietly mourned another silencing of our two-spirit relatives, they lifted water and saw the Morning Star just above them, suspended between the setting moon and the rising sun. There we are! Tēnā tātou! They were reminded that we would never be erased from our ceremonias or our stories. Every morning and every evening we herald the transition, we hold our position between the coming and going. We are Xolotl/Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli under foot and overhead. An underwater star is born.

Methodology from Body: Indigenous Storywork

I research to understand how I am here and therefore perhaps even why I am here or what I am here to do. Decolonization or restoration (Jackson, 2021) is an on-going process where I am constantly asking for the direction that my elders have forgotten or refuse to remember (as a means of survival). Thus, ritual in all its forms has become my toolkit for sinking into the knowledge carried by my body and the mycelium of Indigi-Trans* people.

I am moved to create rituals just as tides are pulled by Te Mārama or tipu are pulled above ground by Te Rā. There is a motion of expansion and contraction, an ever-circulating shape that moves through this universe and in turn, my ephemeral body. The metamorphosis of energy from one element or body to another creates patterns expressed in our cosmologies as Indigenous and trans* people. I recall the image of Tlazolteotl, opening their mouth wide to the heavens, squatting deep to release a smaller incarnation of themselves from center. The regeneration of life through a process of composting death is at the core of my rituals. Engaging in this ancient process, this inheritance, is an assertion of our right to heal and restore our bodies/lands to their cyclical power. To their fruiting body power. To their deconstructive, constructive, tuku iho, power. As I look at these images, these stories of Tlazolteotl pressed into a language of color, symbols, and pathways–my body remembers. I know I need to sit in many more classes and ceremonies where I will learn skilled interpretation and translation of these taonga. As Wilson (2008) states, "We are in a research ceremony" (p. 113), therefore we gather knowledge and power from the universe around us—the "bundle of relationships that were previously invisible" (p. 113). We need many methods for gathering including ritual and ceremony, or listening with our entire being--what Wilson (2008) also calls "extra-intellectual" (p. 113). We can and do listen into other dimensions (elemental domains beyond our own) through senses that are not encouraged or fostered by the Western academy, therefore we sit in ritual and ceremony as a methodology. We sit in ceremony, open to the theory that may be shared if we are ready to listen. Am I ready to hear the story that is within my / ancestors' body? I am here gazing at our body. Are we inside this body, or looking from without? Perhaps both, everywhere and all together.

Give Us a Story



Image 3 Tlazolteotl, Codex Borgia, copyright permission pending

Tlazolteotl squats, maxtla around their waist, footsteps of conception towards their head, new life erupting below. Lunar patterns adorn them, along with cotton and corn, their flayed skin hangs as they remain steadfast and eternal. Snakes, flesh and bone, intertwine to spell Ollin: the dance of life and death everlasting.

As I stand in my friend's shared office, I am overwhelmed and humbled by the images from Nahuatl codices, the Codex Borgia, and Azteca codices on the walls. My eyes feast on all the symbols in their bright colors, unexpected shapes, and sacred repetition. Their language and teachings are finding place in my body as I continue to bathe in their tōiriiri, remembering what little I learned of their meanings during danza Azteca placticas y ceremonias. I would have to dedicate a lifetime just to learn a fraction of these symbols, let alone grasp their meaning through experience. Elizabeth Boone, a codices scholar, maintains that our codices were performed, not kept for reading alone or living a life purely on paper. Boone (1994, as cited in Minor 2014) argues:

> Instead, the pictorial histories are closer to being scripts…[they] were read aloud to an audience, they were interpreted, and their images were expanded and embellished in the oration of the full story…the rough text of a performance. (p. 29)

Dylan A. T. Miner (2014) (Anishnaabeg), a creative practice scholar working towards the shared sovereignty of Anishnaabeg and Xicano peoples, goes on to remind us that, "…within these Indigenous narratives, Mexica scribes embedded the cartographic codices with an Indigenous time-space, what Bakhtin calls "chronotope" (p. 29). Once the performances of these codices were suppressed by colonial rule, the texts were no longer complete and could not fully articulate the knowledge held within the amoxtli, or the accordian-style codex developed by Mesoamerican peoples (Miner, 2014, p. 29). The breath, multiple perspectives of the storyteller and the listeners present, are all aspects that influence the co-creation or performance of a story (text, codex). Stories are sovereign beings and use the storyteller to be transmitted; teaching specific lessons based on who is listening and for what purpose everyone is gathered. A story will never be told the same, even if the storyteller uses the same words because the time, place and listeners are always changing. Listeners will resonate or retain certain parts of the story, the setting, the rhythms, the emotions sparked and thus the memory or tāia of the story will be unique to each listener. The relationship between listener and storyteller necessary to co-create the life of a story is what forms the backbone of this kappi method. I am a descendant of a Mexica storytelling tradition—taking my cues from ancestral marks, although this time the only amoxtli I can access is my body. Through a process of ritual, which combines multiple mediums, I externalized the documentation of power, strategy and creativity that were gifted by my (trans)ancestors and offered it to my Indigi-Trans* community as another site of freedom.

Kanaka Maoli scholar and poet, Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (2018), writes about mo'olelo as a way for Kanaka Maoli to find their own bodies as storytellers and listeners. Similarly to Mesoamerican practices, Heolimeleikalani Osorio describes mo'olelo as interdependent with the storyteller-listener dynamic. Because Mo'olelo and Hawai'i's oral literary tradition allow for many versions of a story to be told, all perspectives can surface at the appropriate time. Although colonial forces seek to interrupt and end our traditions of storytelling by delegitimizing oral traditions (labeled as 'folklore'), Heolimeleikalani Osorio urges her community to keep telling their stories, becoming primary sources just as their kūpuna were for them (Heolimeleikalani Osorio, 2018, p. 38). Mo'olelo, along with my ancestors' oral traditions, continue to resist the western bias towards the written word as "…somehow unchangeable or incorruptible"

(McDougall, 2011 as cited in Heolimeleikalani Osorio 2018, p. 18) by shapeshifting to evade capture and dissolve monoliths. Indigenous storytelling, in all its forms, presents another liminal methodology of creative practice as our stories must be told, or performed in some way. The story–the ritual–must be embodied.

Heolimeleikalani Osorio (2017) speaks to this aspect of embodying our stories by stating, "Our mo'olelo provide a framework and an outline that can assist in the initial finding of the body, but it is only through original composition and performance that the kanaka maoli voice lives" (p. 38). Heolimeleikalani Osorio wrote these words in the context of occupation, the (ongoing) occupation of her 'aina by the U.S. government and military forces, where singularity of truth and history are the only acceptable, even legal forms of education. "Mo'olelo offers many truths and many mana, refusing to be reduced to a single authoritative fact or version," (Heolimeleikalani Osorio 2018, p. 19) creating space for nuance and 'ewalu maka, or the many sacred eyes of the collective to emerge. Indigi-trans* stories, truths, prayers, songs, and hirstories are just some of the tongues that speak, yearning to open many more eyes. Through a creative practice of storytelling, I bring Indigenous technologies of research into another step of decomposing the academy: speak, sing, chant ourselves into presence.

Indigenous methods of searching and gathering such as testimonio (Huber, 2009), pūrakau (Lee-Morgan, 2009), Indigenous storywork (Smith et al, 2019), platicas, and yarning (Shay, 2021) are all based in the land and therefore body. These embodied methods are mirrored in autoethnographic methods that listen "...to and for the silences and stories we can't tell–not fully, not clearly, not yet; returning, again and again, to the river of story accepting what you can never fully, never unquestionably *know*" (Spry, 2016, p. 56). Indigenous story-telling methods go beyond an individual's body of knowledge and require the space between storyteller and listener; a place of exchange (Vā) where other energies may enter, intercede, or intercept and change the trajectory of the story being told or received. "Through the interrelational dimensions of storywork we transcend time and space, connecting…with the earth and the multiverse" (Smith et al. 2019, p. 12). I return to this dimension to gather knowledge through the making of ritual,

a form of storytelling, in the presence of witnesses and all their attending tīpuna and tīpua. As kairaranga and creative practice scholar, Donna Campbell (2019) (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Ruanui) shares, "...I believe the liminal spaces experienced through the raranga and raranga whatu processes are embodied knowing that arises through engaging in the practice" (p. 144). She links her experience directly to the relationship between kairaranga and their materials, referring to Erenora Puketapu-Hetet (1999) who saw "...herself and other kairaranga as repositories, linking the knowledge of the past with that of the future" (Campbell, 2019, p. 144). Campbell reminds us that embodied knowledge, tīpuna memories stored within the fibers of our tissue, can be accessed by the multisensory process of making (Campbell, 2019, p. 155). Indigenous methods of storying are found in the all-encompassing process of making, opening the Vā for practitioner and ancestors to connect. The relevancy of traditional knowledge depends upon this active space between the multiverses of ancestors and descendants.

Just as a body can gestate and create from the DNA of ancestors, ritualists and creative practitioners create from the memories and knowledge stored within our practices, made manifest by our movements. Mana Wahine scholar, Aroha Yates-Smith (1998) (Te Arawa, Waikato-Tainui), links birthing to this re-membering by interpreting the phrase, "Pukea e te wai." Yates-Smith (1998) proffers two interpretations as:

> ...allude[ing] to the breaking of the waters, or alternatively the phrase could be referring to the memories which are embedded in the takapau, the memories of the births of preceding generations which rise at the birth of a new ariki. (p. 167)

When I enact ritual, I break open the waters to birth and therefore, communication. This interpretation from Yates-Smith offers another angle of birthing and creation where the evocation of other births occurs–creating a lapse of timelines as the present conjures the past and I would add, the future. This parallels what I experience when I create ritual, breaking open a timeline to access sustenance and power for survival. For me and many other trans* and native creators, ritual is a matter of life or death.

for survival.

ritual, they press into my mind's palm,

is to live

ritual is how we survive

ritual is your medicine

an antidote

for suicidality

for hopelessness

for genocide, auto and otherwise…

Ritual is survival. We create ritual to stay alive. Ritual allows us to live. We ritual to survive / live. Battle suicide through ritual, purpose, a role in ceremony, we understand our essence in the web.

Pandemic Toolkit: Co-Research Rituals

As a bodyworker and mover, I express this kappi methodology, an extension of creative Indigenous storywork, through somatic listening and exchange. I do not exist in isolation because I am embedded in my ancestors' cosmologies, but I still experience isolation as a trans* person in most spaces. I witness the isolation of my trans* family spread across the world, despite our amazing organizing efforts and collective power. We still struggle to come home, to find peace and safety in our bodies, and I see the toll it takes upon our sense of health. I decided to use this liminal methodology that connects felt with seen to explore trans* powers of reclamation, but in a way that would care for my trans* family. I designed a reciprocal form of co-research where the work and play we shared gave us all new insight into the powers of being trans*, non-binary, bakla, two-spirit, and took care of our bodies. Together, with my Indigenous, Black and POC trans* community, we created a series of co-research rituals.

Who is My Community?

I chose to work with my closest community members in direct resistance to colonizing methods of research (Western scientific methods) that emphasize anonymity, objectivity, and other

dehumanizing ways of breaking relationship. The Western scientific method cannot accommodate all the methods necessary for gathering Indigenous knowledge and synthesizing practice. Indigenous scholarship is an embodied system (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020), land and water-based, thus Indigenous knowledge cannot be made separate from land, water, or other elementals. Our knowledge production is never in isolation because we are always co-authoring with the lands that compose and nourish our bodies. As Shawn Wilson (2008) (Opaswayak Cree) observes of our relational knowledge with land, "…theories and ideas are only knots in the strands of relationality that are not physically visible but are nonetheless real" (p. 89). I have chosen to honor this inherent co-production of Indigenous knowledge by collaborating with my community members in a form of co-research. I come from Indigenous Methodologies (Smith, L.T., 2021; Wilson, 2008) and research, which can hold methods of inquiry that maintain relationships with participants, even more-than-human, and still unearth appropriate knowledge. My scholar-ancestors and predecessors work with land and all the information land can carry as a precious relative whose sovereignty and knowledge must be respected, protected and mutually beneficial. This kind of contract that is upheld with water bodies and mountain bodies is also extended to our human relatives as we work together to create community-based research– research that benefits each member and in turn, the collective.

Because my research is so experimental, it is also vulnerable in its form as a creative practice. I felt it was necessary to offer this experimental work only to those with whom I had a pre-existing and safer (based in trust and transparency) relationship. I approached my close friends and trans* family with my project, particularly BIPOC who are working to reconnect with their Indigenous traditions. I am fortunate to know many people who are working to reclaim their Indigeneity through their trans* experience and I looked to them for guidance and collaboration because this knowledge does not grow or find place in isolation. We are all in relationship to each other, our experiences unfurl in tandem and are connected whether we remember or care. The mycelium of liminal beings abounds.



Weaving Across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa

The pandemic began right before I was scheduled to travel back to Turtle Island (US) to facilitate co-research rituals, so I had to adapt and strategize by moving into a virtual space for connection. Facilitating co-research rituals online is one of the key pieces to my whole-body passage through the initial lockdown of 2020. Aotearoa was incredibly fortunate to only have a two-month lockdown before becoming a nation-wide bubble where we were free to roam about the country with little to no safety-measures, except at our borders. Any hint of community transmission of the virus would throw some or all of us back into some level of lockdown, but it was rare during the rest of 2020 and into early 2021. I am very privileged to not have experienced the whole-body stress and dis-ease of being in lockdown for over a year as most of my relatives in Turtle Island and beyond had endured. I can still see the clear differences in our mental health at the end of 2021, simply because I was able to gather in person with loved ones and community when they could not. The transposition of the co-research rituals from an in-person and on-site space to a virtual space via live video meetings was a necessary tool for working with my Turtle Island relatives, but not the only one.

I facilitated a total of four, online co-research rituals with each storyteller for this project, but we emphasized many offline practices to encourage a personal revival of distance practices that our ancestors left for us. A combination of movement, visual journaling (sketching, painting, collaging, writing), and dream observation brought these co-research rituals into the on-site realm of our bodies and all the lands/waters contained therein. These elements of ritual also helped us to engage more deeply in the virtual space that inherently flattens our forms of communication and connection. The pandemic changed the pattern of methods, but allowed me to see the kappi methodology more clearly as I was forced to create new and multiple forms of connection across the expanse of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Finding the Bones: Constructing Co-Research Rituals

Day __:

…It really feels rather insane to continue chiseling away at a scholarly project while my family, many of whom are nurses and doctors, fight and wait. Fight and wait, fight and wait, fight and wait.

I was scheduled to fly back to Seattle this month (April 2020) to begin some of my co-research and storytelling with my community of Indigenous and Black trans folks; artists and community healthcare workers, dreamers of the lands. Now, we are all inside our homes, or trying to find a safer one without endangering anyone with unnecessary travel. So, I am working on crafting embodied, co-research sessions with my loved ones via video calls. The virtual world has always repelled me and as a member of a generation controlled by handheld devices, I have been grateful for that, but I will need to dive into the cyber world for a little assistance, a little time-space travel (although dreams have that on lock). Just gotta make sure to rope off my anchorstone with a heartbeat.*

-excerpt from my COVID-19 lockdown journals, May 2020

Because I am used to doing body-based work with others in person, I usually rely on each of my senses to co-regulate and sync with whomever I am engaging. Online, through a video call, all my senses are engaged, but I process different environmental information from my co-researcher on the other end of the call. Thus, to create a common rhythm or place from which we can begin and return, I offered a body-based, sensory meditation to guide our co-research. This ritual involved breathwork, auditory attunement, or touch to keep us grounded in our body intelligence. Despite the dissonance of physical distance, these rituals maintained a body-led approach to our co-research and varied according to each co-researcher's needs and desires.

Before working with each storyteller (co-researcher), I constructed the skeleton of a ritual that brought each co-researcher to their own felt experiences of the elements I wished to contact, unfiltered by the mind. All parts of the human body are mapped by our brains, but our intelligence is stored throughout the central and peripheral nervous systems, not just the pre-frontal cortex of the brain (Milne 1998). Through sensory attunement and movement-based

research, I listened to the knowledge communicated by our entire body with regards to my research questions. By breaking down my topic into actions, senses, and moments in time, I created space for whole body intelligence to emerge.

To begin sculpting the bones for co-research sessions I returned to my main research question: How do liminal beings maintain ancestral (elemental and human) connections through embodied practice and knowledge?

More questions grew, without any promise of answers:

- ◊ What is the traditional knowledge housed within trans*, gender-fluid and non-binary people's bodies (house of spirit)?
- ◊ Who are the elemental relatives that reflect and teach us how to be powerful in the between spaces?
- ◊ How does ritual facilitate an embodied exchange of knowledge across human and more-than-human realms to maintain traditional practices that are alive and relevant?
- ◊ In what ways does trans* embodiment sharpen Indigenous strategies for resisting forms of land (body) and water (spirit) theft such as relocation and assimilation?

These questions carried a few key themes:

Ritual Embodied

Elemental

Liminal

For each of these themes I created a free word association or improvised movement. For example, *Liminal*: Vā, flow, stillness, pause, uncertainty, between, Te Kore, rest, discombobulated, multiplicity, crossing, stuck, inert, shedding, leaving, arriving, grieving, rejoicing, connective tissue, interstitial fluid, curled, Nepantla, flat, amorphous, staggered, unpredictable, constant, breathing.

The improvisation is endless. Over time, I brought each theme to a specific site of land, water, time or other appropriate elemental (i.e. *liminal* could be processed at a shoreline or at dawn) to move intuitively in that site. I allowed the energies of that place or time to influence my body, to resonate or clash with the memory and knowledge inside my body/homeland. I continued to gather information on a theme in this way, recording many sensory aspects, especially that of sound or oro. After gathering enough information via site-specific movement and listening, I returned to my notes, recordings or sketches of these explorations and looked for common shapes or frequencies. I then consolidated these expressions and shapes into a few simple actions that became bones for a co-research ritual.

After distilling the movements or words that spoke to a particular theme, I used my experience as a firekeeper (for two-spirit sweatlodge family) and craniosacral bodyworker to (re)create ritual activities based on my research themes (ritual, liminal, elemental, embodied). The following activities emerged:

Touch/Greet Elements/Karakia
Warm-Up/Awaken (generating heat)
Twisting & Rotations (traversing binaries)
Breathwork (linking up, understanding internal rhythms)
Guided Visualization (visiting internal land/water-scapes)
Sensory Attunement (understanding ancestral resource)
Energetic Release (clearing excess heat)
Return & Ground (closing up energetic bodies)
Touch/Thank Elements/Waiata

My research themes also yielded specific body-sites as entries for co-research. For example, some key liminal places in the body are often found in the centerline because these places are between lower and upper halves, left and right halves, or house organs that are key to

transforming energies (i.e. digestion, menstruation). The body-sites that emerged for further listening were:

1. Pelvic Bowl & Sacrum (hips, lower abdominals)
2. Clavicles & Shoulder Girdle (upper thoracic outlet, lungs & heart cavity)
3. Mandible & Temporal Bones (jaw, face, pineal gland)
4. Spinal Integration

By using my intuitive intelligence, or embodied awareness to explore my research themes in and with other liminal elements, I was able to channel movements and sensations that could lay the foundation for co-research rituals. It is through these rituals with other trans* people that I began to locate reflections of the elemental relatives who inspire Indigenous liminal ontologies. Co-research rituals as a method affirmed the movement of a Maui methodology, a Chalchuihuitlicue-birthing-Tāwera methodology: drawing upon the vast spaces between to create home, body, and connection.

Following the shapeshifting dynamic of our methodology, the co-research rituals morphed according to who I was working with in conjunction with our time (cosmologically), place, and how long we had been in lockdown. The pandemic continued to give as well as take, sharpening our awareness of modifying contexts, while simultaneously dulling us to their perceived effects. The collective grief that we experienced as death amassed in larger and larger numbers due to the virus or state-sanctioned violence (global protests sparked by George Floyd's death began in May 2020) created an undertow of depression, anxiety, disconnection and overwhelm. The co-research rituals became a reprieve from the fear and apathy, while also providing a place to slowly access lineages of survival stored in our cells. As the work became increasingly vulnerable through two rounds of co-research rituals in 2020, I continued to feel confident in the Indigenous research principles that guided me, encouraging me to center on research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008), Indigenous Storywork (Smith et al, 2019), and creative practice with my community.

Pandemic Tools: Fruiting Rituals

Creative practice takes on a few different expressions through the methods spawned by a subterranean daystar methodology. The co-research rituals were an intimate space of creative practice where the storytellers explored their inner land and waterscapes in private, or underground rituals with me and their ancestors. To widen my net for gathering knowledge from the liminal network, I decided to bring my somatic practice to a group setting that would culminate in above-ground rituals. I co-created two rituals that would be shared as fruiting bodies of the co-research rituals. Connected through somatic practice and elemental listening, the following 'fruiting rituals' became another method by which I would explore the power of liminal beings to connect ancestral landscapes and knowledge. As other somatic and performance researchers have noted, site-responsive performance (in this case, embodied ritual) draws "...attention to the co-presence of the human and the non-human across a relational field of joint agency" (Brown, 2015, p. 24). This relational field, also a liminal space, is where both the co-research and fruiting rituals found their beginning.

I started a listening practice that began during the first lockdown in Aotearoa (May 2020) where I listened to the movements present in transitional spaces (shores, marshes, bridges, etc.) and at transitional times (ata hāparapara, pre-dawn, pre-dusk). By listening into these combinations of liminal place and time, I enacted my ancestors' practices; an Indigenous method of observation that includes witnessing, listening, and receiving (conscious or subconsciously). This act of listening established a relationship with the whenua (Kirikiriroa) around me, an on-going process because land, water, nor human body is ever stagnant, and it was necessary to ground the co-research rituals as they continued to transpire online and in the ether.

I noticed that like our water relatives, we are always attuning, getting misty, clearing, and then becoming mysterious again. Sometimes we wish to connect and become more, while at other times we just simply are. As I sat with Tāwera and Kōpū (morning and evening star, same body, different entities) while listening to the land and waters open or close their day/night, I wondered what other trans* people would notice here. How did our resonance with the liminal deepen

during these times or in these places? Could we find more sustenance here, despite our hirstorical trauma as Indigenous people, as transformational beings? Hoping to explore these questions outside of isolation, especially after emerging from the first Aotearoa lockdown, I asked a few new friends--Indigi-Trans*, bakla and takatāpui artists--to gather for a dawn and dusk rituals.

Following the Tala methodology that was emerging from my awareness of the relationships between whenua and gender-full relatives, these fruiting rituals applied an Indigi-Trans* method of creative practice research. I will detail these methods in the fourth movement (Bayanihan / Community Strength) as they became two enacted rituals, one named "INDAK-KANIKANI" and another affectionately called "B2."

These two rituals, INDAK-KANIKANI and B2, demonstrate restorative ritual as a method of inquiry, research, processing and even presenting reflections. To fruit is to blossom, to share sustenance, and is an indication of the life force within or underneath. During this thesis, rituals were set into motion, but we (co-researchers, co-creators) were not always aware of the ripples caused by our movements. The rituals took on a meta-aspect where the patterns and movements that became our rituals were part of a greater choreography that did not reveal itself until the echoes were being returned. For instance, during INDAK-KANIKANI, it was not until the final night that I began to understand the source of a piece I had channeled many months before. It was also not until the final presentation of B2 on the streets that we understood the origin of the call we felt to build this small dwelling for many. The enactment or blossoming of ritual–the preparation of water or the closing of hands–this is the offering, the process we follow to retrieve the teachings that lie within us and our lands.

Towards Indigi-Trans* Technologies

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this is not just a theory put into action, a method of inquiry to be stored in the archive. this is life or death. especially during the middle of a pandemic where Covid pairs so artfully with Suicide, ritual is one of the māu rākau gifted to us by our ancestors. left in plain sight, do not fear the

martial aspects of ritual, do not shy away from the power we inherit to redirect, intercept, gather and redistribute. peace remains as we learn to wield mindfully. come, sit closer to the fire of mindfulness, reflect here upon our role in ceremonies. Yes, you too have a position in this "kinstellation" (Recollet and Johnson, 2019). we don't always tell the whole truth, the whole story because it is too painful or unsafe to remember each of us. *we remember you. we know you. You are Us. <<*

>>

The retrieval of personal cosmologies through ritual is a key part of resisting further expressions of auto-genocide such as suicide, an epidemic that continues to threaten the survival of native and trans* communities, alike. Queer, Indigi-Trans* and two-spirit young people "...are subject to some of the most acute and world-shattering forms of violence in Indigenous communities: "our bodies, genders, and sexualities have been regulated in a continuum of violence" (Wilson, 2015, as cited in Belcourt, 2019, p. ix). Our young native people continue to have the highest suicide rate in the U.S. and our young two-spirit/ed people face overlapping barriers to healthcare (including mental health support) as denied and marginalized people (McKinley et al, 2021, p. 2). Suicide does not only plague our young people and I am reminded of this reality every day when I check on my trans peers and elders who still struggle to maintain balanced mental health in a system that does not support trans* life. As I continue to weave the circle that becomes this thesis, I arrive at the center from time to time. There is an unspoken truth that I now glimpse, perhaps the anchor that needs to be lifted so that we can continue paddling. Suicidality, a state of being I have known my whole life, is a *collective* state of which trans* and native people have intimate knowledge, despite its illusion of isolation. The creative methodologies of research that I have practiced during this thesis are not in the pursuit of knowledge production for the academy. These are methodologies of survival coming from Indigi-Trans* land / water bodies, methodologies that have and can prevent further theft of native and trans* life. Ritual storytelling by and for native trans* people is a resistance and reclamation practice. We story ourselves back into our essential positions in our communities, our lineages, our cosmologies. We story ourselves back into being, without need to justify our existence.

Whether or not we are deemed 'useful' in the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty or in the aftermath, we can and do still exist. We are ~~still~~ here. Once we understand and embody our position of joy and freedom, we can continue to realize our full potential as protectors, dreamers, leaders, and creators.

Dear witness, I write the words above to convince you as much as myself.
this is a practice–it is not a static and perfected state
if I stop creating ritual, stop storying myself back, I become
blurred again with the blade or bullet
I want to know ourselves as we are created, not just destroyed.

Gathering this movement, become still. We are ready for reflection, tracing the patterns until our fingers can teach us the code and translate the visions. It is time to cook this abundance down, slowing the ceremony and ritual enough to understand the roles and the teachings within the movement. Our living legacies demand that we slow down, feel our relevance so that we may release the grief and rage that accompanies an indefinite search within the Vā. What is left behind when grief and rage are allowed to move?

This movement introduced us to the many names of the liminal methodology that creates this thesis, grounding it in phenomenological beings and its expression through creative practice. Tracing the roots of this shapeshifter methodology through the role of the morning/evening star and their human reflections in the underground survival of two-spirit/ed and trans* people, we have prepared for methods that gather just enough leaves, flowers, and roots of a collective somatic experience. I have described the creative practice methods I used to transcend academic research and bring the work to a co-research space with human and more-than-human relatives. To honor the harvest shared in other movements of this thesis, we have paused to glimpse the deeper life or death reality of two-spirit/ed and trans* people that drive this work. This kappi methodology and these ritual methods are developed from and for our living and deceased

trans* family. In the following movement, we turn our attention inward to see what connections, what internal spaces are accessed through ritual enacted below and above ground.

Bayanihan / Community Strength

Movement Upat (four) puts theory and methodology into practice. You may notice different voices begin to intercept throughout this movement, giving us a glimpse of the oracle aspects of this thesis, channeling ancestral and collective exchange across time and space. The collective voice will continue to emerge as the harvest (data) from the co-research rituals presents a somatic pathway of knowing. We begin with the sacrum and progress our way to the crown, mimicking the pattern of co-research rituals as outlined in movement three. The human body contains diaphragms, or bowls of fascia that anchor and connect different regions. We will visit each bowl as a section of the harvest interpreted through the liminal traditions presented in movement two. My experience as a member and bodyworker for the Queer, Trans*, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (QTBIPOC) community is also used as a tool for understanding and processing this harvest. As is inevitable with any embodied work, I (ego, author, individual) continue to break down throughout this movement, blurring the lines between re-searcher // re-searched, bringing my own body to the text just as my co-researchers offered their embodied experiences.

The following sections detail the fruiting rituals of “INDAK-KANIKANI” and “B2,” both of which were co-created with fellow Indigi-Trans* artists and were shared above ground in public contexts. Listen closer for the conversation between co-research and fruiting rituals, drawing down more threads from the whāriki of trans* movement. The stories of the fruiting rituals remain free-standing to resonate with listeners without explicit analysis. Finally, the land and water pour in their reflections of these ritual explorations, gently interpreting and processing the harvest but only up until a certain stage. We can linger in the realm of oro or vibration as felt through a water space. Prepare to land in the fluid space, an important demonstration of our Indigi-Trans* methodologies, a Tala, a daystar, a kappi methodology.

this thesis is breaking m (my) body apart

eat your morals she chants

your indignities your strength

she growls

this proprocessing me alive

chomping hinengaro chochmping

bones jumpbled

freedom rearranging life

eat your visions your goals

she inhales inhales inhales inheales inhales inhales

I'm never new

in awe of how much many times I can break

open, rearrange, put back together. again.

this thesis is breaking me down

into a body

pain bent, ache twisted, slowed twinges

I wanted so badly to be you

to be home

A pile of uncertainty, playing detective in my own body, finding origins in my parents' shapes and losses, I have passed the point of embodiment. I have become this project of landless and diasporic disillusion. Stacking power in places I didn't know existed. An avalanche of freedom thundering my pelvis. Do we stay or do we go? Do we die or do we live? Do we fear and stay open, nonetheless? This thesis is no longer theory of the flesh, this thesis is practice of flesh and bone cleaving and sticking, stretching past the membrane. I am violent. I am rage. I cannot have peace without first blood. I am breaking. I am open. I am gushing. I am sounding the tide. I am screeching black. I am piercing gold. I am just following directions. The ngaru crushes left, the kōhatu remains right. Upside and down, I descend. I am no longer separated from before or after. Reunification a myth. We have always been.

Lodged in my right sacro-iliac (SI) joint and overwhelming my left SI joint with hypermobility, I am channeling both sides of my lineage–all the hirstorical trauma, water and land removal, genocide, concentration camps, invasion, flight, and stretching skin (Tagaq, 2022). I can smell my ovulation, my possibility ferning, my pleasure brewing future. Placed before and between me, I am gestating another and another and another. We, trans* movements, re-create from the rubble and distress. We rebirth on the exhalation, living our instinct is trans* movement is unsafe is liberatory is necessary for the evolution of…

The courage to not fear love.
The courage of patience (Hulme, 2004, p. 111)
"I celebrate her voice. Her earnest voice. I am her creator. Her home, her comfort. I drink her tears…My earth monster. My celebration. Today is for her. Today is for me. For choosing to love her, to make her, to keep her. My earth monster" (Tagaq, 2022).

trans* love of self and of each other is somehow revolutionary. this is what is reflected when we gaze into our own eyes, into each other's eyes. when we allow ourselves to witness our desires, we give ourselves permission to become quiet and to become loud, when we give ourselves the roar of grief, when we go waist-deep into the pool of our longing. Trans* people yearn, but more distinctly, trans* people receive what we want. we are not just destitute and rejected. we are made up of billions of desires met. billions of visions realized. a multitude of victories.

Receive to release. It is your turn, now

Co-Research Rituals

Part of the blessing of working with my community, an extended network of kin (whānau), is the common thread of transformation that we have all experienced. This shared understanding of the labor that births transformation gave us a seed of trust that creates a foundation for exploring methods or research together. We co-created a feedback loop that could both ground and protect each of us. My methods of research are inherently uncertain, subject to interference from unseen participants, so I feel immense gratitude to my co-researchers who dared to listen deeply and traverse dimensions with me. The co-research rituals that I outlined in Movement Tulo ("La Llorona, La Corona / Pandemic Methodologies") were somatic based, involving four sessions that consisted of ritual, movement, somatic listening, and creative integration.

After approaching my trans*, non-binary and two-spirit family with a proposal to unearth stories through co-research rituals that would explore our inner lands, waters and the elements who transpire there, I was answered by eight storytellers. When I had an original count of eight storytellers, I split them into two groups (four sessions for four storytellers, two cycles), but two storytellers became unavailable. Proceeding with six storytellers (aka co-researchers), my first round consisted of four storytellers, while the second round had only two storytellers. Both rounds consisted of storytellers who were in different parts of their journey towards reclaiming their bodies, their ancestral lands within their bodies and articulating this connection. All the

storytellers were living in Turtle Island at the time, under similar levels of lockdown and quarantine during 2020. The increase in time under lockdown impacted the storytellers, creating a marked difference between the two rounds (the first round was at the beginning of lockdown, whereas the second round was after almost one year of lockdown). To break through the fatigue of lockdown and make ritual amid much turmoil, I brought in creative, somatic practices to our sessions.

As outlined above, I focused on different parts of the body for each co-research ritual, beginning with the pelvis, moving through the upper thoracic and finally into the head. Each session built upon the last and we added a fourth session for a spinal integration of all three sections of the body as a final reflection. To co-facilitate these sessions, I drew upon my background in Generative Somatics (a healing modality that is social justice-informed, releasing stored trauma through bodywork and storytelling), bodywork, energy work, martial arts, dance, and fire-keeping (tending ceremonial fires). I use the word, 'co-facilitate' because I was creating these rituals with each person, accompanied by our ancestors and other supportive energies tailored to each person's cosmology. I had a general bone structure for the rituals, but it was always subject to change and shift as needed. I felt clear that these rituals were not intended to be therapeutic (beyond my practitioner scope), thus I built in a few protective measures (i.e., short session times, remaining wide in approach, appropriate grounding practices) to create a safer container for these rituals. I also brought in my knowledge of Capoeira, Qigong, Feldenkreis and Yoga for gentle movement that helped to awaken our bodies, keep us grounded and break up some of the sediment from increased time on computers (the pandemic created a huge migration into online life). I encouraged journaling that included sketching, painting, dancing, videos, audio clips, and any form of expression that helped the storytellers to document their experiences and process information from the sessions. We also emphasized an attention to our dreams, waking visions, and other forms of communication from dimensions unseen. These were not always abundant, but they were important moments of integration as the sessions unfolded and built upon each other.

Grounded in a felt sense of specific regions of our bodies, the co-research rituals were already engaging the fluid space of flesh and bone that is patterned by many generations of evolution preceding humans. The places from which we participated in the co-research sessions added another element of dissonance or resonance, giving us a chance to hear the overtones of displacement as we struggled to reconcile the experience of speaking with ancestors in lands far from their origins. Te Awa o te Waikato was a constant presence during these sessions as I facilitated each ritual from my bedroom–less than a kilometer from their banks.

Waikato te awa katohia katohia he wai mau
katohia he wai mau
ka eke ki te Pūaha o Waikato te awa
he piko he taniwha he piko he taniwha
kia tūpato rā kei tahuri koe
i ngā aukaha o Waikato
whakamau tō titiro ki tawhiti rā…

My own creative ritual practices gave me blueprints for these co-research sessions as I sought to provide a space of reciprocity for the storytellers. I wanted the co-researchers to feel replenished or at least curious for more after our sessions, no matter what they encountered as they journeyed into their own bodies/lands/waters. Restorative ritual practice felt even more necessary during the chaos of a new pandemic and continues to feel vital to my creative practice since. The co-research rituals, developed through the trans* mycelium during the liminal period of a new pandemic, are microcosms (or macro depending on your flexibility) of the ancestral exchange found in the fruiting rituals that I later co-created with Indigi-Trans* artists in Aotearoa. In tandem, I refer to this collection of movements as *restorative rituals*.

i / we am / are pregnant with Nepantla.
we are full with endless, everything and nothing.
we are swelling with limitless potential, rich in possibility.

what if we received what we wanted?

how terrifying, how satisfying, how terribly satisfying?

i / we are more than the passageway, we are the gestation found within…the stirring-into-dance of the between: Vā

Ma

Te Kore

who could conceive and incubate Nepantla? how do we give birth to them? is birth even an option or are they always arriving? the place between there and there and there and here and there and here and here, infinitely halving the space between–we will never make contact.

I think I've finally lost control. nickname: Hine-Ngaro. become lost…hidden…impossible void maniflesh. We have finally lost control.

_____—----------_____—----------_____

____—----------_____—----------_____—--------_____

This body of work was generated by mixed, Black, Indigenous, and Trans* bodies. A collaboration of storytellers, all versed in the art of metamorphosis, drew together the sinew and bone of this project. We used our tools–oro, hā, movement, surrender–to articulate our bodies, lands, and waters. This articulation is the establishment of relationship, an articulation and therefore communication between ourselves and our lands/waters. This relationship that exists with body is one aspect of the relationship that exists with tīpuna, tīpua, and all the elementals that compose our meta/physical experience. Discernment is imperative to this process of re-establishing connection with our bodies, assuming we were ever disconnected, and the self-regulation of our bodies has been a protective boundary when traveling into realms of Te Kore, Vā, Ma, or Nepantla.

Each bowl, or section, is opened with a 'found-harvest' poem (coined by co-researcher, S. Hanks-Mackey), meaning that each poem is composed of lines or moments that grabbed my attention during my reviews of the co-research ritual transcripts. They are accompanied by soundscapes created in response to the harvest from each somatic region. Listen to the soundscapes in tandem with the found-harvest poems or at any point that you need some awareness of these regions in your own body. These somatic reflections and related soundscapes offer strands to this unfinished whāriki, or banig of knowledge. It is my hope that this banig will continue to grow as more trans* people care for our own bodies through ritual of any form.

Bowl 1: locate your center 

tucking
untucking
twists
dreamy as fuck
It's your bowl. This is your land.
Give thanks, all the elements that came
together to make and give you this land
that is yours.
rocking
metal slate sliding on itself
tectonic
threads became sparks
I untangled
no food here, nourishing place for spirit
a place that I could go home to, a safe
place, my connection to earth and self
I had to grow huge, big as the mountains
and lake.
before, there was just a void there.

aquifers
these [land] bodies have cavities just like us,
how much our bodies echo the big bodies
that made us, we really are made in god's
image.

funnel
oil-skin, a seal
ferocious in the way that water can be
hollow embrace, palms facing in, thumbs
sky-ward, fingers closed
the sound of 8 birds--a small flock--the
sound a cloud makes, moving across the sky
this is new to be actively connecting my
tailbone helped me connect
been pretty distanced from that for most of
my life
symmetrical and it fit
the more it shifted

spending time with the ground
giving energy to it and letting it in back,
hasn't been something I've done much
during this process
feeling the pull of the earth
Jupiter fog
dense vapor swirl
space
no ovaries no uterus
ya know?
haven't had engagement void-like
central power house
translate all the energy.
as transfolks--pelvis is the site of everything
& nothing

spinning
center of gravity moving lower
connecting back to original energetic states,
ancestors. Elemental beings, how are we
related?
searching for them in our bodies.
Te Kōre doesn't have gender
how do you gender outer space or
the inner space
sculpt these areas
how it connects disconnects
how do we steer the ship together
a closed door. That is also a link
no right or wrong way

We began where our flesh bodies began: within the pelvis. This part of a human body is often charged with memory, fear and desire that extends far beyond the present in any direction. For myself and my co-researchers, the pelvis is a specific site of trauma, dysphoria and ultimately, power. The found-harvest poem, above, is a bricolage of the co-researchers' voices, storytellers reflecting upon their pelvic landscape experiences. Trans* and non-binary people are often categorized and misgendered according to what is happening in our pelvic region because the genitals, associated with assigned sex, also reside here. Although genitalia have no bearing on our genders, transpeople continue to bear the fear and violence associated with how our pelvis is interpreted and used against us in our respective societies. A non-consensual, external relationship to transphobic systems often co-exists with unique internal relationships to our pelvic lands. Besides the often-sensationalized experience of bottom surgery (life-affirming

surgery that assists with re-creating or birthing genitalia that create more congruency for a person born with genitals that do not align with their cosmology of gender), transpeople pass through many other forms of “re” or “dis” connection with our pelvic waters. These processes are often not as overt as bottom surgeries but can require just as much energetic and transformational work to manifest. Many transpeople experience reproductive journeys, despite our lack of representation or access to appropriate reproductive healthcare; all housed in our pelvis, our seat of power. The pelvic lands and waters are generative, regardless of what anatomy resides therein, and my co-researchers renewed their relationship to this power despite the associations between transness and sterility. Indigenous Trans* people are liminal power houses.

After listening, sifting, collaging, and dancing with the transcriptions, notes, and reflections from the storytellers, I noticed a motif that began to take shape: an initial disconnection with the pelvic region that is transformed through a playful meditation. The womb-space came into focus as well, through its absence and presence, sometimes simultaneously. Although the womb as a specific organ or entity was not always directly addressed, its inherent qualities of creativity and mystery were present throughout the pelvic research rituals. Some storytellers have never had a physical uterus or ovaries and wondered how to connect to their pelvis without such a strong energetic reference point. Other storytellers had distanced themselves from their vientre/whare tangata/uterus because it was associated with a gender different from their own. While all the storytellers’ experience of living with a vientre, or creative house varied greatly, their research rituals continued to vibrate to the frequencies of generation. Each co-researcher generated or renewed a relationship (in all its complexity) with their pelvis through the research rituals, anchoring the connection in a land or waterscape entirely unique to them.

Because the pelvic region was often highly charged with (dis)connection, I chose to direct my co-researchers towards the distal aspects of their hips, tail, and eventually, pelvic bowl. By mapping the pelvic bowl through its edges, articulating with less-activating parts of the body, we were able to mitigate harm, but also receive a fuller picture of their internal water and landscapes. Water bodies seemed abundant here in the pelvis, taking the form of ice, fresh and salt waters,

and vapor. Land was present as a container in the form of valleys, caves, and shorelines. The external forms of water and land were always holding our sessions in the form of rain, cloud, stones, and ground that rose to meet our spines or bellies. The lands and waters that were un-fleshed gave much comfort, wonder and affirmation to the storytellers. Their pelvic bodyscapes were at once congruent and surprising, offering intimacy with an other-worldly sense of belonging. The image of a bowl in the pelvis (mimicking the fascia of the pelvic diaphragm), unique to each co-researcher's body, also helped to soften expectations and projections that had previously prevented the storytellers from articulating a pelvic relationship. As we sat in awe of the pelvic landscapes, it was impossible to escape its creative pulls. The co-researchers found themselves writing, painting, dancing, and visioning in ways that felt new, yet familiar. The presence or absence of generative qualities found in the pelvic waterscapes continually pointed to an imprint of Te Kore and their whakapapa as I listened to the co-researchers' process of contacting and embracing the unknown.

As Te Kore, and other expressions of the Void continued to surface in the pelvic rituals, I found affirmation in my draw to this fertile place of nothingness. All humans are related to the Void, or Te Kore in all their expressions, either through our connection to the first life forms or our time in utero. Choreographer, video artist and scholar, Moana Nepia outlines some of Te Kore's whakapapa to help us conceptualize the origins of human existence within a Māori cosmology. Te Kore "...is a foundation and source of creative potential, contemporary existence and potential for future life" (Nepia, 2012, p. 45). Nepia (2012) goes on to note that the personification of Te Kore in whakapapa creates new layers of meaning when considered as part of a "movement or narrative progression through states of sensory awakening and physical transformation" (p. 45). The actions of "perception, exploration, searching and seeking / are given a physical dimension" (Nepia, 2012, p. 45), which is the generative movement I found echoed in the pelvic rituals. Each co-researcher experienced a cycle very similar to the stages outlined by Nepia in his discussion of Te Kore's genealogy in relation to human origins and perception. There was a sense of relief that only exploration can bring when each storyteller confronted the unknown in their pelvic bowl, giving way to an internal land and waterscape that was unique to each person's lineage.

(Re)establishing a relationship with this pelvic place is analogous to the 'sensory awakening' that is characteristic of Te Kore–crucial to the creative process that drives this ritual research practice.

Collectively, we found that our pelvis contains more than elements to create life, something often not afforded to trans* people. We found entire bodyscapes of ancestral places; to pray, to release, to draw sustenance, and to connect to sources of knowledge and power that desire to express through our movements and play. After the pelvic rituals, many of the storytellers went on to write, paint, make music, move, and vision in ways that were previously inaccessible. By articulating a consensual relationship with our pelvic lands, one in which we were choosing to listen and receive by our elementals, we opened a portal to the knowledge housed within our "queer Indigenous bodies" (Simpson 2017, p. 127), housed within our transformative bodies. The power that is generated and stored within the pelvic region began to find a new release and purpose when paired with the affirmation of ancestral recognition. These pelvic research rituals offered a reframe for all of us as we initiated the journey back into our ancestral embodiment as mixed, Black, Indigenous and Trans* people of color.

mycelium not just underground
filaments your lungs
millions of spores inhaled, each breath
how do we know they're not already controlling our mind
my dad wonders aloud
as he flips another tortilla on the colmal.

Bowl 2: hā kina, hā puta



internal space
internal lift
triangle of support
the hypotenuse
massage the floor with your sternum.

active breath
I'm suffocating
anger, chaos, pain
outerspace
a void

pyrite quartz tower
black hole
singularity disc nebula
the dead in our lungs
exchange with all other beings that have lived
more of an ancestral space than I expected
your voice would bring me back
primordial face
I realized this place was connected
contemplate the crystal from underneath
laws of physics break down
It's Friday afternoon and I just visited a black hole & then ate some granola.

planted corn recently
dance for the small ceremony
ribs, string attached
re-introduce ourselves
splitting breath into two
ask this part for permission to engage
massage heart with breath
follow arc of clavicles
what an awesome and strange place.
watery, some dead
this bog
It's ok to be here, we were placed here

craving a paleta dipped in chocolate
I didn't have a bowl.
oyster shell was like "you're not allowed to enter right now"
this side felt pretty open and free--
sky & clouds
tender
surgery, it's only been a year
does it ever finish processing out of the body?
lungs the site of this exchange and site of all this connection.
I just wanna sleep.
thank you for this safe space, I probably wouldn't be able to go there alone.
remember how the body is a brain also.
there are more moments in the day where I let my body move the way it wants to.
have to remember I'm not a fish anymore
I won't be able to breathe under there.

magnet train
floating
next to each other
perfect spacing
cylindrical
solid
self-contained
dresses, armor
is it a spine?

met a girl at a goth club
ended up doing oracle work
something about my throat chakra
to reach higher registers, we must go deeper
voice comes from all different places in the body

am I eternally in puberty?
that map has atrophied.
morning is a weird reconnecting, taking
notice of the spaceship connecting systems,
a reconnecting process
body re-exploration

Climbing up the spine, we reach for the bridge between worlds, in whatever arrangement: our lungs, heart, and the ladder of the ribs. Our lungs are a direct site of exchange between our internal and external environments, including all who have and will share these environments. The breath of our ancestors and descendants (of all species and elements) continues to be recycled. What "in-formation" (Laszlo, 2004) do we inhale and exhale? What do we keep in our lungs and heart center because of this constant exchange? The heart nestled between the lungs, massaged by every inhalation and exhalation, generates its own electro-magnetic force-field, enabling the heart to connect and sync with other fields (Gillin et al. 2006, p. 78). In many humans, the stomach is just below, and is arguably one of the most potent areas of exchange for our bodies as our digestion sorts food for nourishment or toxicity. There are many layers of communicative capacities housed within the ribs and upper thoracic area, but these co-research sessions centered upon the bowl of the upper thoracic outlet as a mirror of the pelvic bowl below.

Again, the sternal region is a complex site for many people, but for my co-researchers, this place proved especially thick with the presence of many other entities. As trans*, two-spirit and non-binary people, we were already aware of how gender-affirming care for the chest (top surgery, augmentation, binding, packing) affect our torso, but we were not prepared for the layers of ancestral grief and rage that had found storage underneath and within this thoracic land. This grief and rage manifested itself in a few ways, from a profound absence and a-Void-ance to deep entanglement with undefinable hirstories and trauma. Either way, we continued to use our hā,

our breath, as the vehicle for moving through and between the plethora of in-formation stored and exchanged within the sternal mud. Breathing (sometimes frustrating, sometimes grounding) was our anchor as we navigated an unexpected combination of external entities and internal stagnation that slowly yielded to a new relationship across time and space.

Breath allowed us to sink below the narratives often attached to our bodies as transpeople, especially the stigma, shame or exotification that surrounds our chests–one of the many sites where gender is marked and contested on our lands/bodies. Pressing beyond the membrane of grief or relief attached to our chests, we used breath to touch those who lived inside and beyond us; exchanging stories and knowledge with us in the chamber that houses our ngākau and hā. These places are sites of knowing and often overlooked as sites of direction. What is possible when our compass is attuned to the land or water? Our hearts, as understood by many Indigenous technologies, are organs of discernment. The lungs which surround our hearts continue to massage and sustain this organ through an equally important function for our bodies: breath. As my lola transitioned from this life, exchanging one form into another, I witnessed her body slowly cease all functions of life. The last movements of her body, as I pressed my ear to her chest, were those of her heart and lungs. As a craniosacral practitioner, I rely heavily on embryology to understand my clients' internal movements and I am constantly reminded of the heart and brain's relationship that begins in utero. Three buds that emerge from the human embryo's shape will become the heart, brain, and digestive system. The heart bud emerges above the brain bud and will slowly grow and descend to its position below the brain, becoming the organ that pumps ceaselessly for as long as we draw breath. A fascial thread of connective tissue will always remain between the heart and brain, even as the human body continues to mature beyond the womb. Thus, our heart and minds are one, as echoed in many languages where the word for 'heart' also means 'brain.' Growing in colonized contexts, many hearts have become separated from brains as educational systems continue to groom brains devoid of feeling, intuition, and nuance that only a feeling brain and thinking heart could navigate. The mystery of the heart-brain will not be fully explored here, but let us return to the lungs–other organs essential to human life above water and under sky.

My co-researchers were surprised by the amount of matter found in their thoracic cavity and lungs. Recurring themes of high-density, foreign but not unrelated energies, and a bilateral divide were present in these somatic listening sessions. The struggle to even locate this part of our bodies was an important indicator of the indiscernible energetic mix (ancestral and personal) that was stored in our thoracic regions, making it difficult to access this bridge between pelvis/root and head/crown (land and sky). Beyond the expected pain or trauma that we each carried in this region, we were met by pieces and memories of ancestors or other elemental energies that had been gathering, collecting, and fermenting. We began to touch a type of wasteland in our thoracic regions, particularly through the lungs, where decomposition was the chorus and fertility the resolving phrase. We found a cemetery in our lungs, the bottom of the moana holding our relatives who escaped, who resisted, or who chose to stay. We found memories, godly conversations, and breaking points. We found the labor of transition in this bridging region of the ribcage and sternum. Together we decomposed with these shards and ancestors, feared the other side, and surrendered to the next phase of Vā, the next face of Te Kore, the next sunset of Nepantla, the next beat of Ma.

I just realized that my heart has been breaking
the last friday, saturday, sunday, monday, tuesday
what's today? wednesday
my heart has been aching
more like the center of my chest has been sore
with each breath
as I write this section,
my body responds, processes
fights. and loses.
"Dear Rachel," I type, "I have lost control."

Along with the tangible anxiety and frustration that we as co-researchers, touched in our thoracic lands, we also found unexpected stillness, peace and even comfort–the kind that only a burial can offer. One co-researcher found another void-like space after he was able to pass through the chaos of his thoracic region (via surrender). There, he observed the threads that connected his ribs to his pelvis, even noticing what connected him to regions above in his cranium. For other co-researchers who experienced a very still sensation, heavy with a magnet-like energy, they also noticed connections within the thoracic region, specifically between the thorax and pelvic spaces. I was reminded that even a 'lack' of sensation is information. This gap in understanding or articulation is Vā or Nepantla; the space between is inherently a connection that has potential for any shape or direction. After closing out from the thoracic waters, each co-researcher took time to integrate this potential, dissipating the painful memories of disconnection or dismemberment that resided in our lungs.

I need to pause here, with lungs on either side of us, to recognize the deep impact of the pandemic on our collective breath and our ability to exchange breath. All these storytellers were living in some level of self-quarantine and lockdown to protect themselves and our communities. This limited in-person exchanges overall, but when we were outside, we still wore (and continue to) wear masks to protect everyone from our breath. Our breath has become a threat. Our breath could transmit the highly contagious virus that is still teaching us about its movements, symptoms, and power. In Aotearoa, we could no longer hongi (greeting through an exchange of hā), let alone embrace–drastically changing the way we greeted and became present with each other. Of course, all of us adapted and have created funny and joyful ways of showing our love without the aid of touch or physical closeness. In all of this, we still carry the grief of what our breath and gathering have become: biohazards. With such a new fear of breath and proximity, our exchanges have drastically changed and suffered, undoubtedly affecting our main organs of respiratory exchange. Some healing traditions view the lungs as a storage of grief, but what is the other side of grief? Appreciation (S.Park, personal communication, Feb 2021). In grieving our

loss of connection, we come to appreciate what was and what still exists within our bodies, lands, and waters.



Bowl 3: touch Void

sacrum waru
dizzy
thread anchor
fall over backwards
find the sweet spot
receive some light, water
what is the face below?
petals shift
wobbly
mildly disturbing
giant stargazer lily
Iridescent blue, as if
underwater
I'm lying on the floor
watching
them this self
help me understand
"yea, because nothing has
existed yet"
just the shell of my body,
nothing there
the Void
always expansions &
contractions

the place between nothing
and everything again
drape over my skull
social face too much
energy
pump soul pump 3rd
ventricle
dream of trickster visit
instant death, felt like
touching the void

sanitizing needs just got
back from the grocery
store
full circle full turn
disorienting
enjoy a slow spin
lima bean
journey of breath
behind third eye enter
who we are will shape
what we lose
what is who I am: my
ancestors gave me these
things & this is my purpose

glass plates imprint of iron
sliding pockets of dead
bird eye to
feline mouth to elephant
ears

so sleepy!
space
running in void
endings somewhere
extending
forehead slipping
realms in, out, inside me
there is a space here
a clear path, but can't see
it or touch it
moon is pretty intense
cycles
laugh
all my faces that fell
its own universe in there
when it's infinite,
it's terrifying
not super sunny, but not
too cold

unlocking
access point
intuitive intelligence
build up trust
I get lost sometimes
I get reminded come back
distinct galaxies
undeniably
being able to see
your usual reflection,
3rd act of space odyssey
information you don't get
back usually new
perspective shift
kinda weird
linked awareness
we're also in quarantine
tapping metaphysical
retreat intersect
bodies are cyclical
middle pillar over time
3 faint dots
::hum three
different tones::
dark matter space
gravitation alignment
synchronicities
the research is
the sketch

spiritual bulb
see what blooms
refreshing
inner shifting, self-guided
don't need a mask, just
use my face
weightless
holding
emotional stretching
nerve glide
change energy change
face

pick up the chain links
we are the multiverse
grief cycle
next round of fucked
cognitively fucked
revealed beautiful things
disturbing & chaotic
something besides this
world
good to come back
like ceremony
gifted a door
down for a walk
down to the water
we realize we're facing
each other

holding pipe
holding baby
Can you see me?

this past week I finally
started praying to them
admitting that I don't
know what I'm doing.
pathways, portals
not wanting to engage
my body doesn't want to
cycle play
quarantine is
compounding now
just zone out
too much
potential
excavating
calibrate ceremony
power as liminal
body & being
laboring--a vision
of power
new moon in gemini
not doing enough
that's just capitalism
everyone craving
everyone flourishing
not feeling spiritual

enough. atang
everyone flourishing
thank you

cross medial line
slow & small
little fuzzy
slightly nauseous
moon brain fog
fuzzy narrow channel
widens narrows widens
creek full just after rains
inter-planetary spirals
not nearly as finite as I
have been told.
creatures in there

bodies with all our
superpowers
grounding & familiar
land in a relationship there
connected stewarding
visible ancestors
external conversation
landscape internal
spirits in the laundry room
lineage vessel we can work
with.
our waters our
cemeteries.
mind the depths
growing traveling
supporting across the
waters

one is grace,
one is grit.
rowing, swimming
flowers and listen to
gospel music
wiggle compass redoing
complex grief
trans people are good
at adaptation
icebergs sore so much
water
subtle quckly
subtle &huge
sphenoid clicking
I have entered the allness
Excited

Having crossed the bridge, we now found ourselves in the complete wild of the unknown: the realm of the third eye, the pineal gland, the space at the center of the human head. This interstitial space, so thin and pervasive, articulating with all major structures of the head; the center-most hallway of a tapu place. We imagined a third bowl in the head (a diaphragm), one that was also dome-like and arched over the connective tissue of the brain's halves, olfactory and ocular organs. Nestled here, we found a distinctly inter-dimensional passageway where we encountered the nothingness that is legendary as imagined through Indigenous stories and creative work. Even contacting the edge of such a vast place within our bodies shocked us into the awareness of attachment to presence, our attachment to the known. As trans*, Two Spirit, Irawhiti, and non-binary people, we can find strength in our intimacy with fluidity, uncertainty and the unknown, but the co-research rituals that focused on the cranial diaphragm revealed

how little we truly understood of the Void, of Vā, of Te Kore, of Ma, of Nepantla in our bodies, lands, and waters.

Crossing the membranes between death and life, the storytellers contacted new sensations that could only be described as the void and inhabited by nothing. The immense clarity that reached back from the other side was a welcome relief after journeying from the pelvic regions, through thoracic chaos and briefly touching the third eye. Many co-researchers described a cold place, here in the center of the head and behind the third eye. They felt metal, ice, glass, incredible spaciousness, and emptiness. White, grey, purple, and more white were the colors (or absence of color) that surrounded the storytellers as they looked deeper into this place. Some of us experienced anxiety, much like that associated with death or the unimaginable just around the corner. Other co-researchers found freedom, peace, and reflection in this void-like place, although everyone echoed a sense of (ancestral) co-presence that eased the dissonance that arises when living beings contact realms of non-existence and death. Transformation and transmutation felt key to remaining linked to the earthly bridge that is the rest of the body, but an unexpected co-presence of elementals or unseen/unnamed ancestors gave us the permission to linger and take in the sensations of nothingness. If it wasn't for this co-presence we experienced, we may have left the inner eye realm much sooner or decided it was an altogether dangerous place. What human or mortal is ready to touch the infinite expanse that slowly revolves just behind their brow? Listening into the cranial diaphragm was not a destination, but rather, a return to the beginning of the circle that is infinite consciousness.

"Like a place where joy and grief collide…a place where you can hear yourself…"

"Then it was nothing, there is no face. I was like no, show me, but there was nothing. There is no face."

-Co-researchers/Storytellers, 2020

The primordial face (E. Cohen, 2019, personal correspondence) emerged as another site of Nepantla and Vā in the cranial region. We accessed this fluid original state by releasing all layers of the face that hold the head at attention (i.e., the social face which faces outward and forward). As part of preparing to enter the cranial diaphragm, I asked my co-researchers to allow their faces to melt, slide back towards the floor and fall off. This task created a pool of release for some, while others had so much tension in their face that it cracked, broke, and shattered around them. Either way, each storyteller had the opportunity to experience the face(s) that lay beneath their human, social face. Since the beginning of this pandemic, our faces have been working overtime on video calls, so releasing our social face was a welcome reprieve. The revelation of underneath-faces felt like an evolutionary un-journey, rewinding our existence to the place and moment where nothingness, perhaps Te Kore, stretches in all directions of time and space. Conceiving nothingness can often induce panic simply because we, as humans, are not in a constant practice or relationship with this quality of presence. For those of us who meditate (in whatever form), or cultivate mindfulness through presence, this relationship can be viewed as preparing to die or re-emerge into the void. Who or what we contact in the void is largely influenced by our lineage as we found in these co-research rituals. Despite the various planet-scapes encountered in the cranium, an expansiveness continued to link everyone's cranial exploration. The cranial diaphragm rituals placed us into contact with a movement that is more apparent during large transitions such as dying or birthing, but these rituals showed us that these movements exist within our bodies, waiting to offer us another line to a primordial matter. Planetary elements such as gas, metal and infinite space reminded us of our origins in the stars–a memory that is easier to conceptualize than embody. By truly embodying these cosmic origins through a cranial somatic listening, we created a return path to our present incarnations as people of the middle.



Integration: Spinal Reflections

"It's not nearly as finite as I have been told."

-Co-researcher/Storyteller, 2020

After completing three rounds of somatic rituals where each co-researcher listened into the pelvic, thoracic, and cranial regions, I offered a fourth round for spinal integration and reflections. The fourth round focused on the spine as a link between all three regions, an interface for knowledge and sustenance that did not always reach each region equally. By bringing awareness to the spine as a bridge, we were able to see gaps and disconnections more clearly, but also bring our systems into a state of tau, peacefulness. Each co-researcher shared an experience of cohesion as they allowed their spines to hold and connect all three regions, even the few co-researchers who still had difficulty tracking their spine. The act of searching for the vertebrae was already a powerful step towards articulating–towards establishing relationship–with the spine and all it houses. The central nervous system (CNS), which innervates all our organs, muscles and bones, lives within or connects to the spinal cord. Because the CNS is stored so deep underneath our external structures, it is more difficult to palpate with touch or awareness, but we were able to drop into a conversation with this system because of the practice accumulated over the previous three sessions.

The fourth session was also a space for co-researchers to reflect on the previous sessions, make connections and notice how the spine could weave and ground their experiences. The storytellers echoed a resounding sense of "allness" as they returned from the spinal integration session, reveling in the "superpowers" that they rediscovered were flowing or lying patiently within their bodies. The reframe of their bodies as regions of land and water was especially helpful during the somatic rituals and gave the storytellers an alternative way to relate and steward their body-spaces, their landscapes. I witnessed this relationship to bodyscape taken a step further as some co-researchers relayed a sense of "returning from ceremony" with the gift of an entry point into another awareness. From my experience as firekeeper during sweatlodge or vigils for Danza Azteca ceremonies, I know this 'awareness' as recognition of interdependence and synchronicities that underlie the multiverse. The co-researchers affirmed this perspective that they had (re)gained by speaking to the subtlety of their internal systems, directly connected to a collective consciousness they had always 'understood,' but had yet to 'experience.' Some co-researchers may have referred to this connection simply as meditation, but until these

somatic rituals, they had not been able to experience this state grounded in the potential of their physical body. Many storytellers described a new confidence in accessing the power of their body-lands to move, release and change how they relate to their pain or trauma (all levels). Where there had been a lack of relationship or communication between storytellers and their ancestral bodies/lands, each storyteller described a beginning or renewal of this connection. This gift of connection, however loud or soft, affirmed our collective desire to listen to our bodies as taonga, treasures of ancestral land and water.

Each co-researcher also acknowledged the pandemic and all its associated symptoms as the context within which they experienced all the somatic rituals. Some of the pandemic effects that were mentioned included isolation, grief, depression, anxiety, suicidality, fear, touch-hunger, release of expectations, deepened self-awareness, and an acute awareness of the unknown. The storytellers felt that the pandemic had broken them down to such a vulnerable state that they were open and ready to listen to their bodies as ancestral lands. The somatic rituals were also a welcome relief from the anxiety and monotony of living in physical isolation for long periods of time. Some storytellers shared that they looked forward to these rituals because they offered a guided, contained way to engage with all the new layers of grief they were negotiating. The pandemic highlighted uncertainty and an inability to engage with meaningful relationships to 'future.' For many trans* and Indigenous people, the future is constantly under threat as we continue to face high mortality rates. It is difficult to plan for or even conceive of a future when we do not see ourselves reflected in our elders. Among transpeople, it is rare to see anyone over the age of 50, let alone 40 because so many of us were lost to the AIDS pandemic, hate-crimes, or preventable illness (our industrialized healthcare systems continue to fail trans* and non-binary patients of all origins). In our resilience, we always develop ways to cope and survive, but even these strategies can lead to our premature death (i.e. substance abuse). These co-research rituals offered a reminder of alternative, decolonial strategies not just for survival, but communication with our potential and the seeds we carry as future ancestors. The rituals gave us a rhythm of presence-ing, or embracing our bodies, lands and all the hidden potential bursting therein.

Alongside the inward journeys held in the co-research rituals, I was also sitting in wānanga with fellow Indigi-Trans* artists and creators who dared to join me on an exploration of the liminal through performance rituals. These fruiting rituals were an above ground reflection of the underwater work/play found in the co-research rituals. These 'performances' that were open to public engagement were the strange fruits of an internal process hatched during my time with co-researchers. I call them fruiting rituals because they can share sustenance with a larger community, rooted in a mycelium of trans* movements and practice.

Fruiting Rituals

The following rituals are expressions of the same elemental practice found in the co-research rituals, applied to creative collaborations in Aotearoa. I felt that to truly contact liminal spaces, I needed to work collectively. As a performer, I know that portals favor the attention of many and tend to occur at the center, or intersection of many experiences. To better understand portals that connect liminal origins, I needed more than an audience–I needed the participation of other energy-workers and guardians of the between (artists, tāniwha, shapeshifters). I brought my somatic awareness of the liminal to creative offerings that connected me to bakla, takatāpui and other Indigi-Trans* or Indigiqueer artists, embarking on the next phase of this journey into synchronicity with the unknown.

INDAK-KANIKANI



INDAK-KANIKANI is the invitation to dance with beings present at dawn and dusk. To initiate this collaboration, I brought a practice gifted to me by the morning star to a few friends who also carried powers of the between. This practice began when I first came to Aotearoa and found myself waking at dawn every morning, a rhythm that was unfamiliar to me (I had been a night owl up until then). I would be drawn outside by the morning star just outside my window and I sat in sleepy awe of the land-water duet during this sacred time. The observations shared during these dawn dates with Tāwera became the foundation for much of my methodology as

mentioned in movement tulo. I found myself also pausing at dusk to listen and watch the change that prepared the land (our body) for night. I became curious about what would become (un)known if I stacked liminal space with liminal time with liminal body. What would we experience if we created hallway rituals at dawn with tidal beings? What else could we learn about the power of the liminal if we created concentric circles of Vā? These were the seeds I brought to fellow artists to begin listening together at dawn and dusk, drawing up bones for a ritual to share with our communities.

The initial group of artists who began this practice morphed over time: some artists got off the waka and some got on further down the river. The transition of artists away or towards this kaupapa was painful and uncomfortable at times, but always abundant with lessons for me and anyone touched by the process. Accepting the roles of fire-starter / trickster, mourner, or grandmother was all part of the recognition process that each artist came to understand. It was important to hear each other's no, yes, and not yet. Our boundaries were the places where we could meet each other (Prentis Hemphill, somatic practitioner, 2020), and understand our connection even if it led to separations. I have come to own my naivete as a researcher within trans* community–assuming if artists shared trans* identities, we would have common ground for creative practice. This was not always the case, and I am grateful for the reminders of our distinct differences as trans* people of varying lineages and generations. The lessons I learned during the collective process reminded me of the trans* inter-generational healing that is still in need of attention. By the time of the final ritual, I was working with a group of artist-practitioners that I could not have chosen myself and I felt blessed by the unseen forces who continued to co-inspire us.

During the group listening and exploration period, I was offered a venue for sharing a performance piece. I accepted and chose a date (coinciding with Whiro) to create a pause for our group work; a place to ground our intention and deepen the ritual work. This date opened a tunnel of focus as the group shifted (in members and intention) to prepare and gather the necessary tools and practices for what would become INDAK-KANIKANI.

This fruiting ritual continued my initial question regarding the (un)knowing that may occur when stacking liminal spaces, times, and bodies. By the time we were ready to present a community ritual, our group consisted of four artists, carrying the imprint of an artist who left the kaupapa a month earlier. We moved urgently towards our scheduled date at the gallery venue, creating taonga that were of unknown purpose, but clearly necessary for the next part of our journey together. INDAK-KANIKANI opened on the evening of 16 October, 2020, continued into the day of 17 October (pausing for evening interference), and closed on the evening of 18 October, 2020. Each day was different as it carried a different intention whether that was opening, weaving, or locking off the pattern (closing). Many witnesses and participants came to play or contemplate, attending anywhere from one to all three days of the ritual.



Night 1: Opening

We opened the ceremonial door by invoking our tīpuna, particularly those who were unknown, unnamed, and craved witness to be free. Because we were in Waikato-Tainui land, and some members of our group were working with their tīpuna Māori, we found ourselves echoing the movement of karanga as seen on the mārae, weaving our ancestral voices from across a threshold, ushering participants up and into the gallery-now-living-altar space. As I wove my oro from my position on the street, reaching and interlocking with the reo of my whānau just inside the door, I felt all the unknown and unnamed pressing into my back. I was at the helm of a large barge, carrying the massive weight of ancestors lost, left, and longing for a shore–a place to rest and be fed, a place to story themselves home. Their grief brought me to my knees, from where I continued to give way to wailing (an artform that is almost lost in my lineage) until I decided that it was time to offer something new, something fashioned from this grief that could be worthy of our relatives upon the shore. What is the medicine that can only be made from grief, from rage?

Day 2: Play is Essential

The second day brought us into a playful reflection period where we continued our ritual in an open-studio format. Participants were invited back to jam with us, help rearrange the living altar,

weave with one of our artists (creating a community whāriki) or talk story in the space. We used this time to look at the experience of the first night and keep feeding the parts that felt the juiciest, calling for further attention and sculpting. It was tricky to be present to the work/play day as the ideas for our closing rituals on the third day continued to bloom. We were excited to see how the ritual would unfold–could it evolve and become what our clumsy doubts could not?

Night 3: Whakapono, Whakanoa

We arrived at the final evening with an unexpected calm that was accompanied by confidence in the unknown. All we had to do was use our tools as we had practiced, trust the unknown and unnamed to do the rest. Channels stationed direct. We experienced the contact we sought with our unnamed trans*ancestors, marveling at how they arranged our tools in just the right shape to tell us a 'knew' story. Having honored them with our witness, grief, and rage, it was time to knot off the ends of this bridge and bring the ritual to an inevitable rest. Sweeping the floors once again, we collected and cleared the altar for a whakanoa complete with 'awa, kai, and laughter.

In the wake of INDAK-KANIKANI, I knew there was more to do with the information we had all received. I did not want the practice of listening to wane, so I continued to sit with the dawn and dusk energies, visiting shores, and writing the between spaces. I visited my whānau that witnessed any part of INDAK-KANIKANI, talking story one-on-one or in small groups to gather their reflections and memories of the ritual. I stored these for continued meditation on what we observed as a community when liminal space, time and body become one. As the effects of this fruiting ritual continued to echo, one of the group's original collaborators began to answer a new vision to create. Fellow creator, Dilwin Santos, conceived a vision that felt possible with the newfound creative community from INDAK-KANIKANI. They were inspired to build a home for our Indigi-Trans* communities, creating a safer resting place for (re)connection with our ancestral bodies despite the transphobia we encounter at home or in diaspora. Dilwin decided to offer a proposal to the Performance Arcade that would take place on the waterfront in Te

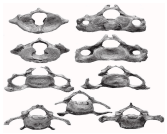
Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) in February 2021 and I was excited to support their vision (another fruiting body of the trans* mycelium) which I quickly came to share.

B2: the BAHAY KUBO

I can only describe the ceremony of creating B2 from my perspective as a co-creator, holding space for the gestation and birth of a vision given to my dear sibling, Dilwin. I cannot adequately represent their motivations for manifesting B2, but I can testify to the ceremony that was precipitated by B2's arrival. This ceremony allowed all the artists and witnesses touched by B2 to process even a handful of the grief and the nuances of native life in diaspora. As the whakataukī says, 'Ko te ringa tangata i hanga i te whare, engari ko te tuara o te whare i hanga i te tangata' or 'the hands of the people build the house, but the body of the house builds the people.' This was truly the experience of coming together as queer and trans* people of naitve diaspora to build a home that would be carried upon our backs and offered as a resting place for the between.

A few members from INDAK-KANIKANI answered Dilwin's vision of a community home, built in the style of a bahay kubo; a traditional Filipino bamboo dwelling that could be lifted and transported by community. In the Philippines, bahay kubo range in size from single room dwellings to multi-story homes complete with plumbing and more. No matter what the size, bahay kubo are unique in that they are built on bamboo poles, which are foundations that can be disconnected from the building so that it can be lifted (by other poles) and carried upon the backs of a collective. In rural areas, bahay kubo are moved when a family needs to relocate, lifted by an entire community–giving roots to the word "bayanihan." Bayanihan comes from the word, "bayan," which can be interpreted as community, town or nation and bayanihan refers to the act of being in a "bayan" or community. The amazing effort of a community to lift a family's home to its new location is the embodiment of bayanihan. As a bakla in diaspora, constantly creating community as part of their survival and joy, Dilwin wanted to explore bayanihan through an embodied ritual in Aotearoa (where they have lived and built community for many years). Combining their desire to relearn ancestral building skills with a desire to visibilize the complexity

of being Indigenous in diaspora, Dilwin called us to construct a bahay kubo for our QTBIPOC communities.



The first building lesson given by the bahay kubo was the practice of asking for help. We had no idea how much memory this project would bring back to our hands, nor what relationships would be returned because of our efforts. Although we knew that a bahay kubo could not be built alone, we allowed Dilwin to begin the building largely on their own because the bahay kubo seemed to be Dilwin's vision and we were still operating from a colonial lens of intellectual ownership and individualism. Although Dilwin had conceived the vision for the bahay kubo, they did not own this vision and we still had to understand the community implications of the bahay kubo's desire to be built. The construction team had ceded all leadership to Dilwin without open discussion, and we did not stop to question this default, especially given everyone's lack of knowledge and experience. Dilwin was no more experienced in the building of a bahay kubo than us, but they are a natural leader and have a deep passion for community safety, thus they took on more responsibility than they could carry. Like many trans* people, Dilwin is skilled at working alone based on an assumption that no one would care enough to help, so they continued building in a solitary manner, asking for little help from the team. They downplayed their need for assistance and we, the group members, allowed ourselves to be called away by other desires or duties. This solitary survival movement was familiar to each of us as Indigiqueers, yet we did not pause to notice the syncopation that hindered clear direction or flow. Soon, the bahay kubo left us no choice but to confront our survival defaults and re-orient to a true embodiment of bayanihan.

The bahay kubo construction had crawled along, on the back of Dilwin's strained and valiant efforts. As it started to stand, it also started to lean and boast precarious angles that made most of us hesitant to climb onto its floor. The foundations were made with collaborative intention, prayer, and labor, but the ground upon which it stood was sloping, thus challenging our naive fervor. As the building continued and we gathered to practice many skills–splitting and cutting bamboo, lashing, weaving, and more–the structure itself did not instill us with confidence. It reflected our practice, of our learning, and lack of cohesion up to that point. It was not something

that could safely house our loved ones or be lifted by them. We continued to work despite our doubts, telling ourselves mantras of trust and patience, but the hierarchical approach to leadership and team communication was obviously failing us as the structure continued to lean and sway as it grew larger. This was not a solid build and our lack of courageous communication and trust in each other was implicated by its weakened state.

It was one week before we were due to transport the bahay kubo to Te Whanganui-a-Tara and we had just begun to secure the roof, but it was not squaring off the angles in our structure as hoped. The slope was continuing to challenge our fledgling building skills and we were stumped. After consultations with brothers and uncles, we found ourselves facing a monumental task of detaching the roof to square off the structure, which meant undoing over half of the building (lashing the structure meant that everything was interconnected). "Well, you may as well just scrap the whole thing and start over," I had commented during a regroup session over dinner. We all paused, stunned by the realization that re-birth was not only possible, but in this case, necessary if we were to truly build a home for our community. One of our team members quickly grabbed the sketch pad and began drawing a simplified version of the bahay kubo and B2 was born. "Simple, easy, sexy," was the motto of B2 as it took our recent months of blood and sweat to the new task of re-starting with just enough materials, just enough time and more than enough support. When we brought the new plans to the rest of our team for their feedback and consent. They inhaled and nodded wisely. It was time to let go of the individualist mentality–it was time to deconstruct the first home, one made from a lonely vision, and construct a new home made from a shared practice: bayanihan. Now, we would all learn to split bamboo, wield the power tools, lash the poles, and even brew the coffee. It was time for us all to lead, to take turns steering and keep paddling for shore.

B2 was created over the period of four days, well under the original timeline of one week, but only after months of learning from trial and error. After surrendering to the deconstruction of our first bahay kubo, we gathered all our new skills and knowledge to repurpose bamboo for the construction of B2. We were focused, trusting and flowing with each other, putting in 12-hour

workdays to complete a simple, sleek and solid structure that was just big enough to hold a small rōpū of inquisitive whānau and tamāriki. Having installed the panels of woven bamboo for walls and a slanted roof, we climbed inside and lied back on the cool, bamboo slats. The floor adjusted our backs like the skilled hands of a manghihilot, aligning our spines with the earth and stretching our hearts to the sky. Finally, a place to rest, a place to listen, a place to remember the smell of home. When we had enough friends gathered for a visit, we tested out the portability of B2 by slipping longer poles under its floor and performing a choreographed lift. The first move felt effortless, like floating the tiny whare on clouds, but we soon learned that the ease directly correlated to who was helping us. The presence of connection, relationships, and trust among those lifting the bahay kubo was key to its safe and smooth transport. While we basked in the glory of our team effort to build B2, we were ignorant to the challenges that awaited us in Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

We had to transport B2 fully constructed because we did not know how to flat pack the structure, nor did we have enough time to assemble it after arriving in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. In retrospect, the ability to flat-pack the structure would have been a huge advantage as we encountered surprising barriers. It was not until we arrived at the gallery which meant to hold the bahay kubo that we learned the curators made a grave miscalculation of their doorway and we quickly saw that we were unable to fit B2 through the gallery doors. This small, but powerful mistake caused a new wave of challenges where we were made to stand our ground as Indigiqueer artists and become uncompromising in our vision for the bahay kubo. The defense of our vision, of our ancestors' practices, ultimately cost us our space in the gallery altogether.

The curator and program director asked us to resize B2 (with only two days until opening night) to fit it through the gallery doors and rest inside the gallery for the duration of the festival. After much discussion, we knew that it was disrespectful and impossible to resize B2 in the requested time frame, but the curator and director did not understand our resistance. They endeavored to pressure us to compromise B2 and make us feel unworthy of the space we demanded because we simply could not fit through their doors. After resisting fear and doubt, we continued to assert

our decision to not resize B2 and instead, negotiated a temporary space on the waterfront (inside a shipping container pre-assigned for other festival installations) for B2. We agreed to carry it to the gallery and create an outdoor installation for opening night, later moving it through public spaces for further engagement and exploration. B2 was meant to live outside, accessible to the public and move through the streets as a reminder of the 'old ways' of community–slowing down to gather and lend strength to each other for a better quality of life.

As we attempted to load and unload B2 into and out of the shipping container where it was housed until the opening, we realized that we needed to figure out another method of transport. Trying to direct a group of cis, white men (builders hired by the festival for the waterfront stages) to help us lift and carry B2 just a few feet was a sickening task that reminded us of where the power to carry this taonga truly lied: in our whānau and communities. But where were our communities in this city foreign to our process? We had assumed that the Indigiqueer and Takatāpui communities in Te Whanganui-a-Tara would hear our call for help to lift B2, but our request was barely heard amidst the din of social media. We had not done the groundwork to re-establish or water relationships with Indigiqueers in this city far from Kirikiriroa. Our Indigiqueer community in Kirikiriroa was small, yet we still managed to build B2 with our adoring group of queers and whānau. Were we presumptuous to think anyone would answer the call of a bahay kubo in diaspora–of Indigiqueers searching for home? We were elated when a few Indigiqueers and siblings answered our call and showed up ready to lift the unknown.

In an epic task of interrupting traffic and hoisting the bahay kubo over curbs and ducking under awnings, we brought B2 to the gallery opening. Because we didn't have enough people to properly lift and carry B2, we improvised and picked up four large rolling coasters that are commonly used to move large furniture or pianos. B2 was not quite airborne, but it was now mobile and rolling down the waterfront towards the gallery on Courtney place–a street known for its pubs and bars. People stopped mid-drink to gawk, or mid-street to hesitate and not honk–somehow everyone understood that this strange occurrence was not something with which they could interfere or heckle. This tiny bamboo house, no bigger than a smart car, slowly proceeded

down the middle of Courtney Place, flanked by our high-vis vests and silk gowns. "Grace and grit," as one of my co-researchers would say. Grace and grit. We heard one witness call out from the street: "You're very optimistic!" Shocked by this epithet, we glanced around and realized that yes, we were indeed a group of young brown people, some from here and some from there, pushing a beautiful memory of home down the asphalt on roller coasters. After carefully calculating our last crossing to park in front of the pop-up gallery for their opening night, we realized that we had assumed a familiar position as trans* and Indigiqueer people–outside the door, too large, too gay, too real, to loud to be let inside.

'Pay it No Mind,' were the words that ran through my head as I carefully began to set up the B2 altar to trans*ancestors like Marsha 'Pay it No Mind' Johnson or Tāwera, the morning star. We are accustomed to creating our own space outside, on the curb, at the corner or deep in the center of things. We know how to create without anyone's permission or approval–this is our survival, the legacy of making something beautiful despite exile. A legacy of creating in diaspora. B2 squatted across from the gallery windows, solid and open, strange to a cityscape and familiar to the whenua beneath. We sat inside B2 creating harmonies with taonga pūoro, greeting all the unseen who gathered in the street or flowed in rivers underneath. We blasted gay anthems and danced in front of the waharoa, welcoming curious passers-by who smelled the fragrant bamboo before they could even see B2. Many islanders recognized the scent of a bahay kubo from down the block and arrived at our tiny whare with tears and disbelief in their eyes. Some of them shot us furtive glances as they rushed past us, trying to ignore the memories we invoked in their bodies. We had hoped the gallery artists and curator would engage with us, but our previous challenge to their vision left us outside with little to no contact. 'Pay it no mind,' our hearts murmured as we remembered that we were there for the whenua, not recognition by a pākehā event. The festival was a means to an end–we were there to make space for the unseen ancestors, the unknown and unrecognizable.

Whaea Marie, whom we encountered the night before during our visit to the gallery site, walked towards B2 shortly after we arrived and posted up outside. We all embraced, remembering the

stories and ferocity she had shared with us from the previous night. Her voice was sharp with age and rattled with an unquenchable rage. It was hard for most of us to understand her words, but our hearts and spines translated her reo. We huddled around her and this time she shed tears for those we could not see, but could almost touch just past our shoulders. Her reo took on a new pitch and soon she was thundering at the frontlines as we felt the invisible battle which engulfed her with tohutohu and whakapapa. Come whaea, we pleaded, come and look, come and touch what we have made. The muka and angiangi of the waharoa greeted her hands and for a moment, we were at peace.

As we continued to offer our oro, kanikani and reo within and around B2, we also had the fortune of meeting a group of manongs who recognized our creation. "Bahay kubo? Bahay kubo!" they exclaimed as they approached us in disbelief and delight. They were all from the Philippines and now worked in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, ignorant to the fact that bamboo can and does grow in Aotearoa. One of the uncles was even a bahay kubo engineer, having built them as a former career in the Philippines, but hadn't touched any bamboo since leaving the motherland. He and Dilwin brought each other to tears as they connected in Tagalog, encircling B2 in mother-tongues and admiration. "You should have called us!" the manong exclaimed, "we could have helped you!" and we all laughed, bittersweet. We quietly grieved that isolation, the illusion of disconnection while in diaspora and thanked B2, the ancestors, for gathering us in a moment of 'home.'

Holding our curbside reflection, we realized that by keeping B2 in its original form, we were able to honor the original intentions of creating an accessible space of public engagement with Indigenous and queer diaspora. We were not here to be praised in a gallery or make a statement to the world of gallery artists, we were here for the communities that search for home: Indigenous, trans*, migrant, queer, and more. Ironically, B2 could not find a home of its own. It had become clear that we would have to disassemble B2 only a few days after having arrived in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara because no one could house it and B2 was deemed 'unsafe' for public spaces (the festival refused to be held liable if the public used B2 for shelter). We could not

afford to transport B2 by truck again, so we had to surrender to its short life expectancy. In the days that followed, we brought B2 out for a few promenades up and down the waterfront in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, pausing in various places to play taonga pūoro, dance, and welcome all who were drawn to touch, smell, and enter the waharoa. Some people had seen us moving through the streets earlier in the week and were curious to come closer and remember all that B2 evoked in them. Many people shared stories of their home islands as they touched the interwoven bamboo and harakeke. Again, we were given the gift of purpose and clarity as different communities were gathered by B2. This was an ephemeral ritual of construction, dark-light, and deconstruction.

Only four days after the gallery opening night, we found ourselves sitting inside B2 for what would be the last time. Lighting guava leaves, we cleaned ourselves with the smoke and spoke prayers, i waiata mātou, and remained silent. We were a mix of exhaustion, rage, grief, relief, and tau. As we climbed and crawled around B2, slowly unweaving and untying, hammering out instead of in, we found the joy of creation again. It was only through the meditation of deconstruction that we began to understand B2 had completed its purpose and journey. The bamboo would go to a manong, and he would hopefully build again with these poles and slats. It began to make sense. Our egos were leveled by the gallery world, and we were returned to our work as ritual artists. Deconstructing B2 was a painful reminder of diasporic movement and memory, but the embodiment of catharsis was sacred; understood only by our hands and hearts.

The fruiting rituals, INDAK-KANIKANI and B2, were powerful explorations of what liminal workers and beings can create collectively. Together with fellow Indigi-Trans* creators, I was able to bring the learnings and questions that were sparked in the co-research rituals to a community space where we could playfully investigate the nature of our power as Indigi-Trans* people. The joy and flow brought about by our ritual play was essential to the work we undertook as trans* people who were facilitating and stewarding connection with ancestral knowledge and practice. To better understand how the co-research and fruiting rituals manifested a Kappi methodology of creative practice research, I will now turn to land and water epistemologies.

Ecotonal Reflections

Gay'wu Group of Women (2019) generously remind us:

> Country is our homeland. It is home and land, but it is more than that. It is the seas and the waters, the rocks and the soils, the animals and winds and people too. It is the connections between those beings, and their dreams and emotions, their languages and their Law. Country is the way humans and non-humans co-become, the way we emerge together, have always emerged together and will always emerge together. It is all the feelings, the songs and ceremonies, the things we cannot understand and cannot touch, the things that go beyond us, that anchor us in eternity, in the infinite cycles of kinship, sharing and responsibility. (p. xxii)

Here, Gay'wu Group of Women refer to their land (Country) as not just place or even the beings that come from it (incuding humans), but as the very gift precipitated by being in relationship with it. Land is not simply an object or place of importance for Indigenous people, it is a "field of relationships" (Deloria 2001, as cited in Couthard, 2014, p. 61). Home/land includes all the songs and ceremonies that anchor us, but how do they function when we are no longer with our home/lands or have no personal recollection of its scent, color, and taste? For displaced and landless natives, we still know what is described here by Gay'wu Group of Women, but we must find and make these connections through adapted practices of survival. In this section, we can pause to listen to the water and land movements that are present in this liminal harvest and what they teach us about Indigi-Trans* powers to transcend landlessness. What land and water movements are present throughout INDAK KANI-KANI, B2, and each segment of the co-research rituals? How are all these rituals linked through the flow of water and the building or erosion of land? Can these fluid layers give us a glimpse into an Indigi-Trans* land and waterscape? As we find the elemental movements that drive these rituals, we can begin to understand an inherently trans* or liminal power of perception. As part of a trans* methodology, we must also pay special attention to the presence in absence. Does the lack of these elements create a silhouette, giving us an inverse-dimensional approach to understanding trans* lands? As I continue to work and

play from a landless position, I revel in absences as an indicator of what is to come, what has been and what is ever felt (although often unseen). Practicing the art of listening to water and earth movement, fire and wind movement, ether movement, is essential to protecting and safely transmitting the vulnerable knowledge of *transmovimientos* (Hernandez, 2021).

Each ritual, enacted publicly or led privately with co-researchers, gave us another moment to contemplate the land-water bodies that generate liminal power. INDAK KANI-KANI brought us to the shore, which contains the shoals that are also an ecotone: "a combination or meeting of at least two distinct ecological zones" (King, 2019, p. 3). This amorphous mix of land and water that changes placement and rhythm–revealing or covering life and death in a cyclic manner, echoes the movements felt throughout INDAK-KANIKANI. Tiffany Lethabo King (2019), Black abolitionist and decolonial scholar, describes what they call the "Black Shoals" as "an in-between, ecotonal, unexpected, and shifting space / requir[ing] new footing, different chords of embodied rhythms, and new conceptual tools to navigate its terrain" (p. 4). King (2019) looks to the formation and movements of shoals to open new analytical possibilities for Blackness and Indigeneity, but I find grounding for my harvest analysis in their observations of the shoals' "unpredictability / knowability / mappability" (p. 3) that links such mixed bodies with the restorative rituals found in my research.

In addition to this dynamic space that is always in a state of flux, shoals as part of the shore are changed with the pull of the moon, a celestial body that made themselves very clear in the ways each artist/channel moved during INDAK KANI-KANI. All four of us overlapped over the course of the 3-day ceremony, some of us were pou–standing tall as if of stone or wood–while others of us lapped in and out around ankles–slowly eroding the fears and expectations of every witness/participant in the room. The elements of dark and light, which create a spectrum of colors at dusk and dawn were also key visionaries during this ceremony. Although night and day are always changing during a 24-hour period, another way to conceptualize an Indigenous spectrum of gender (Simpson, 2017, p. 140), these shifts are most apparent at dusk and dawn. By beginning our rituals during these doorway hours, we were able to interact with the energies that come and go at these times; traversing realms that are otherwise closed during the height

of day or night. Whatever dance, song, story, oro, or tilt of light that came through us was a direct result of our interaction with these dusk and dawn travelers. This crossing time was also apparent in the physical aspect of the stairwell that processed all participants who came in and out of INDAK-KANIKANI. This stairwell was transformed into a canal, of birth or death it was not always clear, but it was a passage that cleansed all who bowed forward and entered. The transitory zone of the stairwell again echoed the arrivals and departures that all our shores have witnessed, bringing anything from decimation to affirmation of our futures as Indigenous peoples.

The process of constructing B2 brought us into direct conversation with ancestors as we struggled to learn their techniques through trial and error. The properties of fire and wood were present here as we were pushed to dissolve and grow through a period of practice, failure, and repetition until our hands could remember what worked best for our body. Similarly, the participants of community-based research conducted by Fernandez et al (2021) where tribal members re-walked the Trail of Tears to consider its effects on contemporary tribal health, our physical engagement with ancestral practice "...generated / new ways of thinking about health that may have not originated without the / experiential design of this project" (p. 27). Trusting ourselves with new tools, including machetes, was a humbling process where we had to surrender our fear and think slowly, methodically. Learning patience, gathering collective strategy and trust, and embodying survival in a new way (health) was mirrored in the growth patterns of the large bamboo which became B2. The uncomfortable space we entered through old techniques of building (both structures and community) renewed relationships with our own ancestors and thus, bodies. Again, like the Trail of Tears community research, we saw (re)connection through a cycle of disequilibrium and doubt, breaking down and breaking through (Fernandez et al, p. 24). We ultimately had to build by feel, as well as precise measurement, which was a beautiful way to focus on the necessity of intuitive intelligence in all research.

Assembling the bahay kubo was a ceremony of community research–gathering knowledge, testing theories, formulating new methods, and presenting our data through a structure that could house a safer space for our communities and practices. This ceremony inevitably brought

us into conversation with our tīpuna, especially those of metal and wood as they expanded our ability to confront our loss of knowledge and release internalized colonialism that thwarted our efforts to move collectively. Fire brought us back together each time we broke as a group, taking the form of will, inspiration, and alchemy. The fires of rage as landless natives transformed our grief into strategy and resource. Retracing the steps of our tīpuna, we created a shelter to carry, plant, uproot, carry, and plant again within the silhouette of 'home.'

oro , vibration and other forms of (sound)waves also threaded INDAK KANI-KANI, B2 and the co-research rituals. Oro is coupled with breath, which was the main vehicle used during the co-research rituals and brought forth elements that often felt cosmic, yet marshy in their complexity. Having lived in Kirikiriroa for the first two years of this project, I became sensitive to the qualities and movements of a marshland (although backfilled and covered with farmland in most of the Waikato region). There is so much water present in these hybrid spaces, thickening the fog that wraps Kirikiriroa, rushing within Te Waikato Awa, and stored within the soggy ground. I am continually amazed by how much water is held by marshes and have come to appreciate how precious they are to our hydrocycles and water supply. Mixed bodies like marshes are echoed in the movements that surfaced in the co-research rituals as storytellers experienced a matrix of elements that undulated with each region (pelvic, thoracic, cranial). From the decomposition that feeds the ocean floor to a singularity disc at the heart of a nebula, the co-researchers witnessed and felt the collision and union of opposites within their bodyscapes. The liminality approached through paradox gave us a base from which to better understand or at least find a little comfort in the presence of our elemental lineage. Oro continued to give us an entry point to these elemental relationships, but more importantly, oro gave us a way to ground and release the grief and rage that often collected in our bodyscapes. Oro through breath is the vibration that loosened and shook our awareness free from a human-centered lens. Over the course of the co-research rituals and enacted rituals, we were returned to our elemental legacy within and without.

Many of the storytellers and artists that worked with me during these rituals came to this project with mixed experiences regarding land loss and reclamation. Water was often the connecting element despite where we were on the spectrum of landlessness, forming our oceanic and river highways, blessing us from above in abundance or with a precious rarity. Water allowed us to expand and contract as needed to hold and bend as necessary for inter-dimensional movement. Where we experienced a gap in memory or embodiment of ancestral lands, we could find at least one form of water (fog, ocean, creeks) to soothe the discomfort of not-knowing and even carry an imprint for future research. It makes sense that water was an ever-present element throughout all these rituals, given our lineage as humans and especially for those of us who are Moana (Tecun et al., 2018) descendants. Our seafaring epistemologies (chant, ocean travel, inter-island relationships) show us that "land, sea and humans are mutually constitutive of one another…challeng[ing] notions of Indigenous "rootedness" in static time and space" (Diaz 2015 as cited in King, 2019, p. 9-10). Our experiences as islanders, diasporic natives, and Indigi-Trans* creators continue to complicate Indigenous associations with land because we are often found in the flow bestowed to us by our oceanic and fluid lineage. Even if a co-researcher was not particularly attuned to water as a presence, I always maintained its movement through the breath because I was facilitating these rituals from my home next to Te Waikato Awa and their surrounding marshlands. Wai, danum, atl, water, fluidity gave us a place to which we could return at every point of our research rituals.

In listening to the elemental expressions of our bodies as Indigi-Trans* storytellers and artists, we have glimpsed the bones of a trans* land epistemology. As Indigiqueer, Kaupapa Māori, Black Trans* Feminist, and creative practice scholars have shown through their research: Indigenous bodies are always generating theory and engaged in our own research. This ongoing theorization of our lives and experiences is born out of survival and a desire to reconnect our legacies. We tell our stories and draw sustenance from them to create beyond the loss often conflated with what it means to be Indigenous. Located in the elements that sculpt our world and create our flesh, our traditions are alive, unstoppable, and evolving. The time we spent listening to our land-bodies as Indigi-Trans* storytellers confirmed that our liminal traditions and arts are very much

alive in the lands and waters that compose our very being. Our body-spirits are direct channels to these teachings, available and accessible through a combination of somatic presence and ritual play. This nuanced form of listening allowed us to articulate the beginnings of a trans* land epistemology, or the liminal practices that have been honed by Indigi-Trans* people over many generations to nourish our original instructions regardless of time or place. Trans* land epistemology can continue to develop with further creative practice research by and for communities of Indigiqueers who transform monolithic narratives of Indigenous loss and erasure.

This movement, "Bayanihan / Community Strength," gave us time to sit with a precious harvest that has been graciously shared beyond the Indigi-Trans* community that co-created it. I have presented windows into this harvest through a somatic experiencing, interlocked with soundscapes that deepen our understanding of my creative practice research methods and the liminal spaces of generative bodies. I have allowed different voices, especially collective ones, to speak clearly through this movement–intercepting and confusing our path to emphasize the lived experience of 'purpose despite displacement.' Through their joyful experimentation and reclamation of embodied ritual, Indigi-Trans* and trans* people of color choose to share their ancestral practices of liminality, grounded in elemental understandings to give us a glimpse into a trans* land methodology and epistemology. I will review the possibilities of a trans* land (and water) epistemology with its possibilities for strengthening community health and survivance in the following movement, "Transness Can Only Create Aliveness."

"alder," they* said, "prepares the land"

prepares the land

prepares the land
for

by improving the health of the soil
we often will witness the coming and going

of one alder within our lifetime that is how short
their lifespan is
short as humans

their decaying bodies prepare the land

prepare the land
prepare the land
"eat this, and remember me"
tipu find protection

tipua find kai/tiaki
tipu grow

“they are the lymphatic system,” they*
continued, “of the forest”

rising daintily between, liminal
neighborhoods draw them
between ocean and mountain, dune and
forest, cliffs just over the slope

“sounds like the step after mycelium,”
they* said

how ever-spreading this filigree
ink in water
tracing the expanse
that never stops except when
a contraction
is promised

*herb walks with S. Hanks-Mackey

“Transness Can Only Create Aliveness”

Movement Lima (five) is a departure from my community-researcher voice as I allow my personal experience of pandemic, death, and joy to process the harvest presented in Movement Upat (“Bayanihan / Community Strength”). I place vulnerability at the center of this analysis as a form of sovereignty to continue breaking down the line between researcher and researched. This is beyond an auto-ethnographic lens because unnamed voices from beyond this body (of work) have been invited to channel here, readily intercepting as appropriate. They give me permission to offer listeners a “Ritual of Refusal” where we are reminded of the fugitivity and refusals practiced by our ancestresses to protect our pathways to freedom. Because we are not all free, we can only share what is necessary to transform survival to thrivance (Nelson, 2008). Through a journey into our grief, rage, and joy, we will brush against Indigi-trans* strategies for freedom (aligned with an abolitionist lineage) and health. As always, the mycelial network of trans* possibility continues to anchor this fifth movement as a trans* epistemology of land and water continues to surface. Come, let us return to the soil beneath and the water soaking up and through–these are boundaries we can only come to respect and love.

Ritual of Refusal

This has become a ritual of refusal. As I prepared this fifth movement, I kept hearing the echo of refusal: a trans* refusal to be known, categorized, assessed, or mined for information. Dear witness, we have given you so much and most of our gifts will never be consciously known or at least not all at once. This is the beauty of our shifting positions, cyclical as the tide or the duet of earth and rain. Different knowing or unknowing will occur depending on when you approach this kaupapa, depending on where your feet are planted or what is pulling at your na’au in the moment. The light which illuminates this creation changes as dawn approaches or night deepens. Thank you for bringing your whole body to the listening; your whole spiritual house and the land that makes you. Your body, dear witness, made of your water and land, affects the ceremony that is this thesis. Stories are told with the words and movements that need to be heard. Nothing

less and certainly nothing more. When I asked you to prepare yourself to listen to a story, what did you do? Were you prepared for the entire story, including the lacking and unfinished? Our silence or omission is also an answer. That was the answer I often received when I first asked about the place of two-spirit people in ceremony. Silence, accompanied with a gesture only discernible by family, is another answer that refuses to be translated or recorded. Our families have communicated nonverbally long before it was necessary for survival or escape, but these forms of communication continue to protect and add nuance to our stories, answers, and questions. Sometimes the knowledge contained within a story or ritual is not for you, is not for us. It's ok to be refused. It's important to be refused; to be given limits and experience a state of uncertainty. The confusion or gaps that leave us in a state of unknown are at once indicators of "no," or "not yet," while also offering a quiet place of endless possibility. For some listeners, we remain curious and waiting–free to imagine what could have happened or will happen. For other listeners, we may feel disappointed or even offended–driven away from the story and pushed into a deeper wānanga with ourselves. Whether we feel a sense of challenge or belonging, Indig-Trans* stories and rituals are endlessly generous in that they will always teach witnesses and listeners something about transformation and its role in creation.

Our phenomenological and elemental relations refuse to be known everyday as we witness their incomprehensible shapeshifting. Our Black and Indigenous trans*ancestors also refused to be known and therefore subject to capture by colonizing forces. We refused by being true to our roles and were thus fed to our makers (crocodile ancestors) by Spaniards in our own islands. We refused by practicing our shape-shifting traditions and hiding in plain sight, living to free another generation. We refused by learning to swim, fly or run across borders of the living and the dead–inspiring liminal arts of communication. Our refusal to be explicit and fully intelligible is necessary to protect the vulnerable knowledge shared within these pages. In some ways, we depend upon the dismissal of creative practice as unquantifiable so that we can continue to roam beyond academia and into the open hearts of practical hands everywhere. How can you refuse a story that is tethered by wind and rain, sowing your seeds, and watering your crops? These stories of

trans* embodiment live beyond data, theory, or method–they are the pulse in our mycelium that beckons us to remember beyond colonialism, beyond capitalism, and beyond binary.

As we prepare to return to the middle, gathering up our memories of grief, rage, and joy, it is important to notice where we feel lost and what we learn about ourselves in those unfamiliar places. What does discomfort or confusion tell you about your own position, lens, or agenda? This ritual of refusal is for all trans people, especially Indigi-Trans* people and our elemental relations. This ritual of refusal is for transformational beings; those who seek to live authentically and surrender to the uncertainty of creation. This ritual of refusal is for those who breathe–not just as a function of life, but to connect with tīpuna, more-than-human relations, and the oceans of time. This ritual of refusal is for creative practitioners; people who cannot live without the creative process as a constant source of grounding and inspiration. This ritual of refusal can be for you, dear witness, should you decide to step into your own mystery, your own song of surrender.

Trans* Mycelium: Giving Our Land/Water Back

The title of this movement, "Transness Can Only Create Aliveness" was written by my trans* sibling and co-researcher (a. warren, 2021) after reflecting in ritual with their ancestral body-lands. This profound statement encapsulates the energy of what I have come to call the trans* mycelium. I liken trans*, especially Indigi-Trans* movement to mycelium because it can be found everywhere, even extreme or uninhabitable environments, and can transform death into life. Mycelium are part of our land and waterscapes, although unnoticed underground, and can be found anywhere in the world. I invite you to look at the fruiting bodies of this trans* mycelium that bloom all around us—a harvest of trans* joy and knowledge. Although this harvest presents uncertain or unfinished stories, these refusals generate an abundance of space and 'yet to be determined.' Our refusals generate futures. Futures have hirstorically been denied to trans* and Indigenous people by colonial agendas, and although we bear the violence and loss wrought by these systems of oppression, this is not the only dimension we bear. Our mycelium creates to exist and exists to create (resilience is not for exploitation) because we are of earth and meteor.

Our code of creation is passed down from our first ancestors (fungi/bacteria from beyond this planet, star people, sky mothers, boundless nights), driving us to keep shifting and growing at imperceptible rates and distances. Transness can only create aliveness. Perhaps it is because we have become close with death and all her tastes, perhaps it is because of our dangerous existence (in the face of colonial empire) that we wear our mortality as a jewel in our teeth. Trans* movements of surrender to life is far more daring than the submission to death. As is evident in that lack of resources for trans* elders (any trans* person beyond the age of 40), we have yet to sink our fingers into the clay of intergenerational power. May our Indigenous traditions of elderhood meet the needs of young trans* people everywhere so that we, too, may know our legacies in an earthly realm.

After completing the co-research and fruiting rituals (surrender-practices), I am presented with a prism of grief, rage and joy that rose out of the pandemic context. This prism is the lens through which I look, touch, and listen to our bone harvest (data), allowing the vulnerability of these collective rituals of grief and rage to show us 'knew' strategies for survival, health and thrivance (Nelson, 2008). As native and trans* people, we have always been both at home and in resistance (hooks, 2014, p. 43), but our joy helps us fruit beyond the colonial binary and bear possibilities for community action and hau ora.

Collective Grief & Rage

Grief became an unexpected guide, a labor companion of sorts, during the last year of this thesis journey. Grief ushered me into a level of surrender practice that I did not know existed, especially as my contact with my ancestral body-land deepened. I found myself between layers of whakapapa, pressed into the stone of my Chiricahua Apache ancestress and covered in the sand of my Visayan mothers. If you have ever tried to run without swallowing water placed in your mouth, you know the burn in your lungs screaming for oxygen, you know the thunder of your heart as you inhale and exhale only through the nose. A slow-motion surrender begins to unfold. It is a quietly frantic window where time suspends, where a hope thrown into the air reaches zero-gravity before its descent. This moment between the inhale and the exhale is a gift from

grief, if we can step through the fear that accompanies the threshold. Grief begs us to confront in-between moments without which we have no bridge between here and the other side of loss. These between moments create a liminal place, however uncomfortable or unstable, that became essential to my creative practice and understanding the purpose of ritual research.

The global protests that followed George Floyd's death in Turtle Island coincided with the first COVID-19 quarantine in Aotearoa, 2020. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement had already been gathering momentum for years, but the murder of George Floyd by police lit a new chapter in the movement for Black lives and freedom from institutionalized brutality and genocide. The COVID-19 pandemic was already surging around the world, colliding with the grief of yet another preventable death of a Black relative (at the hands of police), sending global communities into a state of rage and desperation that found expression in our rite of protest. I was just acclimating to quarantine life in Kirikiriroa, when I was thrown into a four-day vigil before I was aware of the news of what was unfolding in Minneapolis. The day the Minneapolis police precinct was burned, I fell into a strange lethargy from 4-8 pm, weeping and sleeping, unable to drink water or do anything but lay in bed. I dreamt of urban fires and could hear the wailing of distant ancestors; I would hear voices chaotic as if I was slowly pressing into another reality completely different from my own. This vigil continued for three more days, always from 4-8 pm, after which I would begin to regain consciousness and finally get up to make dinner. To where was I being transported? These voices and images did not seem to come from a different dimension or realm. I was catching snippets of very real conversations and seeing moments that could easily be occurring somewhere else on the planet. These visions were very human moments, but frenzied and violent. As I began to catch up on the news of Minneapolis and all the protests that echoed across the U.S. (and eventually the world), I began to piece together the trance-like vigils. Ultimately, they were expressions of a mycelium of grief, fruiting rites of rage. The rage expressed on the streets were exacerbated by state suppression, which refused to grant witness to the collective grief ritual that was emerging. As I watched and listened to footage of protests in the cities where I grew up (Los Angeles and Seattle), I saw a vigil of grief. What would happen if the state not only allowed, but *joined* us in grieving? I remembered a dream I had of Mauna



a'Wakea where a national guard soldier took a knee instead of rushing to block his o'hana from protecting their sacred mauna. What was this collective grief ritual and how did I come to access it from across the world before becoming conscious of the global uprising?

Below are excerpts from my journals that remember this collective ritual. These pieces were written during May 2020, from my room near Te Waikato Awa in Kirikiriroa, Aotearoa:

this is

lightning the fire
pigment mark the ground
gather in front
process to higher sound

this is

flow of salt, water, and cells
mucus given freely
what will be turned?
who will give blood for our children

this is

shocking our mycelium
flowering capitalist plenty
we fruit a head of accelerated
death always arrives a bit early

this is

tangi in bed
hair too thick to ever dry
none of us sleep
but still, manage to meet in dreams

this is

clenching of Te Pō
wailing of tendons
gripping of bones
singularity poised blade under throne

this is

every night every dawn every noon every dusk
wash the water black hints of gold, cerulean, garnet
there is no gap without the walls
retrieve the bullets, wrap them in cotton, wool

this is
the whole world gone to church
highways the aisles,
precincts the confessional booths,
children our priestesses,
prison stations of the cross,
city halls the sacristy,
national guard←→protestors, the altar boys and girls
white house lawn, our basement dance floor.

this is

Pele stirring underfoot, under concrete,
under time
attempted suicide we call genocide
we feel your amnesia
we deny your pain
rifles pointed cortisol spiked adrenals shot
not a recipe for sane

one of many last straws
the crack that swallows whole
species, super or not
this is heart tissue syncing,
(dis)harmony our final breath.

this is 

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I see a global grief ritual. All the uprisings, riots, marches, rallies, evacuated precincts, autonomous zones--these are all moments in a larger ceremony of mourning, preparing the way for a transformation of grief into joy. I hear breath, ragged and bellowing, I hear dignity in boundary--the kind of ferocious care oneness needs to extend itself if we are to survive. I see lamentation. In death, all of grief's children are allowed to emerge, to breathe, to stretch limbs and thoraxes, to play in the rain and waning sun. Collectively, we ride the waves of lament, mourn not only our prematurely departed, but each and every theft, loss, and awakening from the coma that is colonization, that is capitalism, that is anti-blackness.

When we are allowed to openly mourn, to receive the witness and affirmation of our pain, anger, sorrow, rage, and confusion…when we are not allowed to openly grieve, the wound grows wider and deeper. How can soldiers' hands cleanse and suture when they were only instructed in the opposite? How can healers' hands bring water and plantitas, when we were only instructed to fear our dreams? The moments when police officers and national guard soldiers made way for mourners-rioters to dance, march, scream, sing, shout, and kneel, the wound began to clear itself a little more. Allowing the ritual to continue, allowing the ceremony to make its way, folding

space and time--this is our duty as a species in this moment. The earth continues to clear themselves, peeling and shaking, how are we any different from the earth-body from which we all come? We must allow the cycle to progress, not stagnate. Allow the cycle to bring us from grief into joy and beyond. Allow the cycle to rebirth our power as Black, Indigenous peoples, following the visions of our transancesors--striking the balance between.
–excerpt from my COVID-19 lockdown journals (May 2020)

Rage and grief give way to liminal states of consciousness where we can access communication, information, and understandings previously denied to our rational mind and thus fertilizing grounds for intuitive intelligence to sprout. Through grief and rage, we are placed in a threshold: the sunset or sunrise of our beings. These emotions often usher transitions that allow us to shed the ego that blocks our pathway to collective consciousness. Although rage and grief are not the same and are experienced differently for each being, they are intimately connected. Experiencing these states of emotion despite the threat of capitalism (no time to feel, especially if not for profit) is part of the freedom created by the co-research and fruiting rituals. I will continue examining the links between grief and rage to contextualize the harvest from these rituals.

I slowly turn my attention to rage because they still frighten me and possess a strange scent that I am only just learning to recognize. This is how far I have been assimilated—unable to feel anger, unable to respond to their presence and therefore, unable to give my anger what it needs for release and peace. A somatic practitioner once reminded me, "Rage is what occurs when anger cannot be expressed" (N. Picone, personal communication, May 2022). Although I am still coming to articulate a relationship to my anger in an effort to dissipate rage, I look upon rage as an expression of the grief mycelium, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and global BLM protests that picked up momentum simultaneously during 2020 and 2021.



Rage a flowering (trigger warning for this sound key).
Rage an herb,
prepare and use with caution.

Rage forbidden,
rage revelatory,
rage purposeful,
rage embrace.

Rage has often been used against people of the land who refuse to exploit the land (our bodies). Despite the danger of rage to Black and Indigenous people as an external tool of domination or an internalized tool of self-harm, I have chosen to enter a relationship with my rage. My trans* rage. My native rage. My brown woman rage. My brown boy rage. My ocean rage. My underwater volcanoes. I remember an old lover of mine--trans, Black/Native, and brilliant--reflected upon the barriers to trans life and asked me, "What about trans rage? Where is trans rage? Where is our rage?" (A. Aliyu, personal correspondence, 2017). We then began to discuss the suppression of our rage and even the blatant denial of any such existence. Rage? It has not ever been safe or strategic to rage, privately or openly. Rage was and is a dangerous flower that we do not dare to admire, inhale, or take home for remedy. But what if we could allow ourselves to stop and meditate on this rage? What if we trusted ourselves enough to engage with our trans rage? What else would unlock, would fall away and soften if we were able to give our ancestors the space and courage to rage.

rage
the machete
cutting the path
cutting away obstacle
Ogun
carry this burden this limit
far from our shores
skin tearing
the seams of
rage

What anger have we been unable to express and what can it teach us or allow us to finally grieve? Can rage, unsheathing anger, finally uncover grief? I have internalized the grief I have inherited and in turn, suppressed my anger out of a desire for safety. This anger has grown a mantle of rage that cloaks my shaking body, my frenetic shape that threatens to shatter dimensional boundaries every other week. This rage pushes many Indigiqueers to focus on healing, whether of ourselves or our communities, but have we allowed ourselves the time to encounter our rage, first? Given the amount of mental dis-ease and suicide that we continue to suffer as trans* and native communities, it is clear to me that we are not only suppressing our rage (intimately connected with our will to live), but we are also unable to fully grieve. Rage can find many expressions, but have we been taught to channel it effectively and harness its power to dissolve our chains? To dissolve the oppressor that lives within and without, rage must be allowed to flow and leave a space for the rest of our complexity to emerge.

The space left behind the release of rage, the healthy expression of anger, is an open place for grief to unfold. In the clearing, grief can finally breathe, allowing our bodies and therefore lands/waters to breathe. In a time where breath is quickly becoming weaponized or taken away, this movement of breath is revolutionary. Grieving as an exchange: inhaling presence, holding memory, and exhaling future. This cycle regenerates and cleanses just like our breath, whether it is through our mouths or the stoma of a leaf. Although I kneel at the beginning of my path with grief work, my experiences of grief during this thesis have already given me a foundation for trans* methodologies, including the ritual of surrender. The encounters with ancestral land in our bodies and in our ceremonies were possible because our co-research and fruiting rituals made space for rage and in turn, grief, to unfurl. Although grief and/or rage was not always explicitly named in the co-research or fruiting rituals, I was acutely aware of their presence through refusals, 'dead-zones,' and silences. Their presence through an illusion of absence has coalesced with my own experience of grief and rage during these last few years of pandemic, forcing me to bring my testimonio to translate the absence.

Risking Translation

In sharing these windows of grief and rage, I am also opening windows between the realms of the living and the dead. The co-research and fruiting rituals taught me to be clear about who or what I invoke when opening these windows, but the creation of this thesis has weakened my ability to discern who enters or leaves. I will linger in these windows to deepen our awareness of how creative practice research functions to serve the seen and unseen.

After coming through pandemic lockdowns, trans-oceanic travel, and the death of my lola, I have learned that grief is the place where more than release occurs and is in fact an important step in (re)creation and (re)generation. I had channeled spirits, ancestors, entities before, although I did not know how to make sense of it at the time, but during my first lockdown in Aotearoa, this channeling space became much stronger.

"perhaps it's best left for the diary"
but I cannot deny my methods
I cannot deny spirit in this place of scholarship
in this method of gathering information
in this ceremony of research
some people refer to dreams,
which somehow seem more acceptable for public knowledge
but the movement of channeling
of receiving information during a wakeful state
this, this is a little too…

well, let's just say this is what landed many of us
in a psych ward, in prison, in one cage or another
because we were stamped out first
the ones who interpret and divine,
the ones who communicate with tide and wind,
so that we might harvest or fish.
murdered first so that our people would be broken away

from our own bodies, their own cycles, our own waters
this is the danger
this is the method
this is channeling today

speaking with, interpreting for, translation is the art of bridging

connecting, integrating, honoring the relation
ships between

The lockdown, crossing Te-Moana-nui-a-Kiwa multiple times, and the death of my lola created a pressure that intensified my liminal lens of space and time. Companioning my lola's transition into the afterlife gave me back my power to break open. I was ushered into a new state of consciousness when my lola passed away in August 2021, just a few months after I returned to tend to my family in Turtle Island. I had already been peeling, pulling off the myth of singular reality that was isolated from all other times and places. Being in Aotearoa's lockdown of 2020 showed me that despite distance and time, I was part of a collective experience in Turtle Island because it is the land that composes my body. I could feel the vibrations of change reverberate from one body (Turtle Island) to another (my flesh). Is this how land, water, ancestors, and elemental beings communicate despite colonial constructions of time and space? My lola's death broke my last pieces of exoskeleton–the one that kept the rest of my doubts and fear in place. Her final shed of her body brought me to the shores of my own ancestral body. Perhaps it was because she exhaled her last breath in my hands and I found myself floating in a space of…

She let us take a few of her limbs to plant in our mouths and sprout
children that could speak her language.
We waited until the moon was beginning to boast his belly,
drawing jupiter and mars near,
then we tucked the tender wood into each cheek.
At first, their shape was difficult to hold, but with time,
we grew to wonder how we ever spoke without them.

We underestimated how the limbs would change us.
Some of us began to see different colors,
some of us started to remember old trading routes,
and some of us found more soulmates to break us open again.
We started to understand each other, day by day,
and learned to ignore the involuntary tears that accompanied our speech.
It was painful to speak as the limbs became
distinct among the usual chatter of the stars.
The gliding of clouds began to fill our ears and
some of us never learned to turn down the volume,
or perhaps we just didn't want to.

Of power. In a state of choice. Holding the hand of death gives the power of clear sight. Mortality's jewel shining up my teeth, I have visions of future made present by my choice to live in purpose, in alignment with my desire which is their desire. I hear them in chorus once again, "When you doubt yourself, you doubt us." Kneeling upon the shore of an ancestor is dangerous for a suicidal child, but I was not alone. The strange blooms that sought light from the storytellers' pelvii, ribs, and jaws—their color of struggle brought me home. The strange blooms that erupted from a collective yes to creative practice in search of land—their oro guided me through the obsidian mirrors. My lola's departure collapsed the gap between my grief and my power, and it was because of my community's commitment to play along the edge that I am still writing and creating today. The liminal powers of grief and rage give me, my fellow co-researchers, and co-creators the ability to surrender to creative practice. Our creative practice is the channel and the lens through which to understand our bone harvest. Ultimately, this harvest is a dance of refusal and surrender: the refusal to be assimilated and instead, surrender to joy.

Surrender to Trans* Joy

"So how do we transmute our grief? Never let it exist without also bringing joy.
That we are able to mourn, still means that we are here."

-Jayy Dodd, "A Poetic beyond Resilience" (quoted by Marquis Bey, 2022, p. 205)

Now that we have a handful of uku, the satisfying mix of water and earth, play with it and let it anchor your senses. Touching bark, hearing the tide tumble stones, smelling the earth open to receive rain, tasting cedar smoke, adjusting your eyes to the twinkle of mokohuruhuru (glow worms) along the path–all these sensations are conversations with our elemental lineages. These conversations sustain us, especially as trans* people–when we are pushed to the extremes of 'home' in our bodies, we can reach for our earthly relatives to reflect and affirm our transformative powers. Journeying through the subterranean of grief and rage can be discombobulating; clearing coping strategies that no longer serve us as the survivors of genocide. In the well that emerges, this empty peace, do we pause? Wait for the inevitable to rise? Can we tolerate the joy of surrender that grows with each inhalation and exhalation? As Indigenous people, as trans* people, our Joy is an indication of community health. Our trans* joy is traditional. The change and transformation necessary to create a community that nurtures joy and liberation for the most vulnerable among us will benefit everyone. The change may feel painful and uncomfortable at first to those who seem to benefit the most from colonial systems, but this is an indication of radical healing. Shifting the roots of any system will cause shock to an organism, but can be alleviated by surrender to the rewiring process. We do not need to struggle against the inevitable shift, the tendency towards healing. There is not a human nervous system that I have encountered that does not tend towards its own healing; this is the blueprint we have contained since conception. If this blueprint is mapped at such a micro level, it begs the question: is it a fractal of a macro pattern? If so, what can this macro pattern offer us as we seek the healing of the human mycelium?

Blueprints for Nourishment, Recognizing the Mycelium

As mentioned in the movement upat (Bayanihan / Community Strength), there is a trans* land and water epistemology that has been taking shape as I process the harvest from co-research and fruiting rituals. Aligned with an Indigenous understanding of place and land as the "field of relationships" (Deloria, 2001) that sustain and create us, encompassing all our ceremonies and memory (Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019), a trans* land epistemology echoes as mycelium, or the underground network that nourishes fruiting fungi bodies above ground. Mycelium are a

highway connecting fungi and all surrounding plants, even some insects, through various forms of biochemical and energetic communication. Fungi continue to inspire a trans* land epistemology as they show humans more and more ways to decompose toxic and inorganic substances by just following their basic life function–like the trans* creativity that abounds and offers transformative futures for all people. Despite their other-worldly expression of a kaleidoscope of fruiting bodies (mushrooms), fungi are a powerful community of beings that offer an incredible amount of medicine to this planet. Within the human realm, Indigi-Trans* people are just as important to our growth, communication and healing as fungi are to the earth.



Trans* Joy is one of the sparks that pulse a human mycelium. I refer to our human mycelium because we descend from fungi, among many other supra-human relations. In the context of Indigi-Trans* knowledge, I invoke our fungi ancestors because they were one of our originators of life (made something from the void), refuse recognition (they form their own kingdom, which is still largely unknown to humans) and are the ultimate transformers/decomposers. Fungi relations teach us about our connective capacity as well as liminal power to transform energy. The relationship between fungi, mycelium and trans* people is how I understand the gifts of the ritual harvest; contained within our networks and fed to each other as needed.

There cannot be mention of mushrooms without their psychedelic associations being conjured and as a Xicano descendent (my lineages are linked with *los santos niños* or psilocybin), I also look to these interdimensional interlocutors as a trans* counterpart and affirmation. The information stored in the rituals facilitated by *los santos niños* (and all other psychotropic plants with whom my ancestors also consult) is part of the evolution of human healing–pushing us to confront necessary change or align with our potential. Two-Spirit, Bakla, Irawhiti, Indigi-Trans* people's existence and sacred knowledge pushes the human community to also face our evolution (in a genealogical sense) with 'grace and grit' (a. warren, personal correspondence, 2020). We cannot meet the resurgence of our Indigenous traditions without locating the roots of colonialism that continue to reach and spread within our bodies and consciousness. Trans*

people, like our *santos niños* relations, force us to become aware of the colonial toxins that circulate in our system (the collective) and give us the practices to locate and decompose them.

We Are a Sign of Life

The rituals I have presented in movement upat offer glimpses of these alchemical practices where I, along with co-researchers and co-creators, have returned to the source of our mauri in our bodies and supporting lands or waters. Returning to this mauri, however difficult, gave us a torch to light the way, to draw us closer to our passion and joy–our purpose. It was no coincidence that many of the co-researchers, artists, storytellers were noticing subtle and obvious ways that their lives were shifting to reveal their true desires. What made us yearn? What made us ache and would give us that sense of 'homeplace'? For some of us it was being present, for others it was being free from pain, painting, writing, kickboxing, but whatever the desire was–however big or small–it called us back to our original lands and waters, within and without.

INDAK KANI-KANI and B2 were powerful examples of transmuting colonial toxins found within individual bodies and experiences, as well as that of the collective. Both rituals required a slow practice of presence, surrendering to the discomfort of interconnection with beings and legacies beyond our knowledge or consciousness. From this contact with Te Kore, with Nepantla, with Vā within our land-bodies, we began to locate open spaces; spaces free from agendas that took us away from our source of power. By reducing our sensations or narrowing our focus towards an internal waterscape, co-researchers were able to find "...the stillness in solace and meditation, or return to somewhere familiar" (Nepia, 2012, p. 107). The co-research rituals and fruiting ceremonies invited all participants to surrender total control in the quest for unexpected connections, echoing Nepia's discussion of Te Kōre as a reduction (in this case, of sensory awareness) that expands possibility (anything can be imagined/exist in the dark). By following our intuitive intelligence, an anti-colonial tool in itself, we were able to respond to the breadth of internal land/water/planet-scapes with a steady desire to gather our inheritance. Instead of chasing trauma and all its associated states, we sought the space between and began to articulate it through creative practice. In the case of INDAK KANI-KANI or B2, we transmuted colonial

remnants like shame or self-hate through practices of oro and constructing sacred spaces. The process of building, whether through vibration or with bamboo, called the ancestral memory and therefore, power, up from the depths of our bodies. As Nepia recalls a Māori perspective on Te Kōre as not only primordial source, but also contemporary existence ("ngā kanohi ora"), I am reminded that we were living our ancestors' ways during these rituals, living the space between (void) by giving breath to so many creative possibilities (Nepia, 2021, p. 108). Breathing life into our creative practices, the space between is an active ancestor, protector, and decomposer of blocks to trans* life and joy.

The co-research rituals gave us back our lands, waters, planets, and in turn, our connection to joy. Joy is generated by flow and an alignment with purpose, however grand or mundane. But how do we connect with our roles as Indigi-Trans* people if we have been living under constant persecution and erasure? It is difficult to have a relationship with the future if you do not see yourself reflected in elders and you are excluded from lineage. The somatic and creative practices that we explored in the co-research rituals opened us to the awareness of our cosmic place–of the unique, yet foundational role we have as trans* people in our multiverse. This awareness was sometimes subtle and shattering, but encouraged our abilities to continue showing up for our reclamation of body/land. The co-research rituals unearthed new tools for connecting with a "pattern of liberation" (DAJ, 2021, p.49) stored within our energetic and physical bodies. This pattern of liberation contained health, wellness, and the ability to thrive, whatever that looked like for each person. Even if it meant that a storyteller/co-researcher could experience rest for an hour, this was an expression of something beyond survival. I began to see a pattern of thrivance (Nelson, 2008) emerging from practices explored in the co-research rituals–tapping into creative forms of healing that honor both our ancestral and contemporary knowledge.

The culmination of the co-research and fruiting rituals was a return to a sense of belonging, a brush with home/land, and a sense of place, even if brief. We found place in at least one part of our bodies and felt alignment flow from that place, or we were able to recall memories of

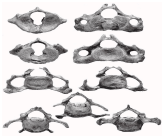
home/land and revel in their restorative properties. These moments of (re)connection with trans* origins, previously inaccessible in isolation, were some of the gifts distilled from this harvest. They are a salve for the wounds of separation that many Indigi-Trans* people continue to carry, reflected in the many ways that our lands and waters are also denied sovereignty or relationship.

Reflecting on the gifts of place that were returned by this ritual harvest, I recall a painful lesson regarding two-spirit people's role in community. During a Sundance ceremony that was intended to uplift women, I found myself suspended between women's and men's circles, unsure of where I fit in service to the ceremony. In response to my questions regarding our roles as two-spirit people, a two-spirit elder barked in my direction, "Two-Spirit people ain't shit. You're not special, so get back over there and do your work." This redirection of my search was shocking, at first, but then sobering. Eventually, while enacting my two-spirit power (covering any gendered role in ceremony as needed), I felt this elder's attempt to normalize two-spirit people in a traditional context. By reminding me that we aren't special, he was resisting the ways in which two-spirit people have been singled out (for our sexualities, gender or body expression, fluid power, etc.) and targeted by colonizers' systems of oppression. This is not to say we are not different from our families as each person has a unique purpose and role in community–how else would we survive and grow without differentiation? Yet, our difference is not to something to fear and therefore revile, but because two-spirit and gender-sacred people are often the most powerful and concentrated expression of our people's traditions, we were and continue to be targeted and killed by colonial systems that seek to exploit our lands, waters, and relations.

Returning to a trans* epistemology of land and water, two-spirit educator and researcher, Itai Jeffries (Yèsah/Occaneechi), reminds us that two-spirit people are of the land and reflected in how our more-than-human relatives express, changing our landscapes. Jeffries (2019) demonstrates this through a story about the connection between sassafras and two-spirit people from a Monacah, Sapponi, Yèsah perspective. In this story sassafras teaches about villages, two-spirit people and gender diversity (Jeffries, 2019).

Please take a moment to listen to the story here.

According to this story, sassafras has three leaf shapes–one lobe, two lobed and three lobed–each representing a different gender (women, men, two-spirit). The three-lobed leaf represents two-spirit people and is also the leaf that distinguishes sassafras from other trees in their lands (northern coasts and southeastern forests of Turtle Island). Because sassafras is such an important and strong healing plant for their people, identifying them in the forest is a sign of medicine. Likewise, "When you went back in our villages, back in the day, that's how you knew there was medicine there in the village–was because you could see the Two Spirit people" (Jeffries, 2019). This story confirms the important role and place of two-spirit people in native traditions–not special or better, but still essential to the health and wholeness of our communities. We have always been holding the stitch between (K. Walters, personal communication, Jan 2019), yet we need to feel the embrace of community to heal the ways we have been separated, been made 'special' and therefore different. Different and therefore a threat to foreign colonial systems. Transness, however named or expressed, has always existed, as is evident in our land and waterscapes: the place that births us, Indigenous knowledge, and technologies. All these relationships existed before settler-colonial systems invaded our lands, our bodies. Through the harvest gathered in the co-research and fruiting rituals, we are presented with more reminders of these powerful relationships to land and water, before trans*people came to represent the antithesis to white supremacy. Trans* people do not exist in relationship to whiteness or settler-colonialism. We exist in relation to our waters, lands, ancestors, and descendants. This power of place, as highlighted in this ritual harvest, has kept us anchored despite the auto-genocide (Simpson, 2017, p. 127) perpetuated by the erasure of trans* ancestors and children. The decolonial project of uprooting transphobia from Indigenous traditions, ceremonies and bodies is an urgent and ongoing process, one that will be continued by our children. Regardless of recognition, we will still flood like a desert monsoon, destroying settler constructions as we expand our rivers to feed the land and people.



Strategies for Indigi-Trans* Thrivance

The implications of the co-research and fruiting rituals for Indigenous and trans* health and right to life continue to unfold beyond the bounds of this thesis. As a bodyworker and community artist, I have always been oriented towards the healing of my communities through creative practice and somatic presencing that is rooted in Indigenous Knowledge. Although I originally came to this kaupapa with questions for my elemental ancestors about trans* power and potential, in the process of digesting the ritual harvest, I have come full circle as a health worker. I am humbled by the openings made by enlivening practices for myself, the co-researchers, storytellers, and co-creators. There are many strategies for community 'health,' in all its iterations and limitations of the word, that can be gleaned from this harvest–particularly for Indigenous and trans* people.

For me, and for many of my co-researchers and co-creators, we chose and continue to choose joy. Our joy as trans* people is strategic–a tool of resistance and relocating our freedom–but it is also a simple act of love. Self-love and love of each other, our trans* joy grows despite the conditions in which we find ourselves because "transness can only create aliveness" (a. warren, personal communication, 2020). Our trans* joy is the continuation of prayers and prophecies sewn by our ancestors. No one needs to prove this to us via the remnants of colonial records that failed to accurately portray our knowledge even before they went missing. We know our joy to be inherited and powerful because it brings us from capitalist isolation into cosmic relationship. Our bodies, houses of spirit, are living testimonies of this ancestral practice: the creation rites that bring us from rage into grief into joy, again. It is a decomposition cycle that gives way to joy and Indigi-Trans* communities (including supra-human relations) feed this cycle generously.

INDAK KANI-KANI and B2 are bursting with joy–the kind that makes you get up to go look for the source of that delicious smell or that hypnotizing beat. These community rituals were born out of grief, rage, and a passion to know more. The joy that we found on the other side of these

ceremonies was not always grand or obvious to by-standers, but it was often subtle and only for those who dared to surrender to the small and unseen. The co-research rituals took this kind of listening even further by beginning and staying within the realms of each storyteller's body-land. We may have found entire universes within our bodies, but we worked from a micro-perspective of listening and feeling; following the language of our land-water-bodies that refuse to be translated, but insist on being understood. Collective and solo ritual helped us to articulate a relationship with our bodies, however tenuous or delicate. Through ritual, we located ourselves in movement and in this location of ourselves we created greater access to all that we contain and create, including joy.

Trans* Freedom Work

As witnessed during the co-research and fruiting rituals, Indigi-Trans* people are always creating fierce connections through self-love. Loving ourselves into our traditional stories–finding our reflections regardless of how colonization has distorted our sense of lineage–this is just one of the ways we locate ourselves back in the middle. Through the power of naming, although contested as a colonial practice by some scholars (Hutchings & Aspin, 2007, p. 140), trans* people are reclaiming our positions in the constellations of Indigenous power. By recognizing our reflections in the world that gave birth to us, we articulate our relationships and therefore place. Articulating relationships with our bodies (and all ancestors therein) is part of articulating this sense of place through renewed language (i.e. irawhiti, fa'afatama, bakla). In doing this, we call our communities to recognize the separation and erasure we have endured. Say our names, embrace us through witness, reclaim Indigenous power by welcoming us home. We, trans* people, must do the same. We must sing ourselves home, not for healing as we are not broken (Simpson, 2017, p. 102), but for reclamation of our power to grow and spill (Gumbs, 2017). As my co-researcher and hermané, a. warren, wrote in their co-research reflections: "Transness can only create aliveness." Despite the death that we usher through our transformations, we always seek life–the life we crave or the life of future and free trans* people. By living in joy through our ancestral embodiment, we invoke a place of refuge ('stealing away') that enslaved Black and African (Indigenous) ancestors practiced to imagine freedom (Benjamin, 2018, p. 48). It is

through an enactment of ancestral landscapes (Benjamin, 2018, p. 48) and the strategies sewn into our bodies, that we find our joy and freedom as Indigenous Trans* people and relations.

I am pulled aside by my sibling as they drop a captain-obvious bomb:
this is abolition work.
your methodology, they chuckle, is abolitionist methodology.
I stop, mid-sip, and stare into my predecessor's eyes:
how have I been moving through the bush without this awareness?
how have I been denying myself the affirmation of this lineage?
but, I reply, I haven't researched abolitionist scholarship or methods enough,
I didn't weave that into my foundations, this is too much to integrate at this point.
my sibling grins back at me over his cuppa and shakes his 3rd eye tenderly.
oh, brother, you already know this work because you strive for freedom every god-given day.
trans adaptability is vital, necessary to our survival.
these were the dances learned to navigate the Underground Railroad(s),
this is how we exist beyond the incarceral state.
I look down at my feet, still unsure of how to shoulder this mantle.
I am unworthy, yet ignorant and fearing appropriation…

¿
is this a Mycelial Methodology
a Fugitive Methodology
an Abolitionist Methodology
a Liminal Methodology
a Lost and Found Methodology
a Refusal Methodology
a Ritual Methodology
?
before all else, an Indigenous Trans* approach to learning, to becoming:

fantasize ourselves back into existence
put our faith in the process,
conclusions a mere resting point:
illusions for the frightened.
live so loudly that we are mistaken
for the winds and rains.
¿
fugitivity is foundational
mycelium networks
trans* fugitivity is a dance
kata, form, sequence
to be changed within each body.

I see a beloved's newest art piece:
a neon light that spells the words,
"abolition is…" (Cullors, 2022)
she stands proudly beneath it, presenting her body as response
inviting viewers to repeat the ellipses, finish the statement.
I remember, abolition is liminal.
abolition is the crack threatening to blossom.
abolition is unnamable, unrecognized.
abolition is fugitive dreams feeding,
abolition is change.
abolition is realizing freedom, while still chained.
abolition is process, unyielding, a journey through loss.
"Get lost generously," (Akomolafe, 2021)
the trickster beckons us to follow.
shall we? shall we enter the bush with no assurance of an answer,
let alone, home?

shall we pledge to playfulness with no guarantee of tomorrow?

come, follow me, if you want to find home:

"And i don't have that assurance, all I know is that I'm getting further and further away from the plantation that owned my body, and claimed my labor and owned my mind and insisted on me thinking in particular ways. And maybe the trickster can only offer us that. For the moment, get lost [chuckles] and maybe home, you might glimpse that you are already at home in your navigating foundness and lostness, you might find a more thrilling, exquisite home that your language, your present language cannot accommodate" (Akomolafe, 2021).

Come here, rest a moment. Come out from the bush and step into the clearing I have sought. We are quite skilled at getting lost, no? It's not as hard as it seems and I thank you for following me here without any assurance, any guarantee of…home, answers, belonging. What did you gather on your way here? Can you remember any parts of the path made by our crossing? I believe we were just meditating on joy, trans* joy, before being led into this patch of sunlight. I smell ponga here, kōrari, and harore. I hear a tui, just a few meters away, waxing eloquent and on repeat, searching for a mate. I taste ūa in the air as the soil opens their pores and readies themselves. I feel the chill of ngahuru slip up my sleeves in anticipation of Matariki's return. Let us continue to reflect on trans* thrivance from this living whenua of Aotearoa.

This fifth movement has brought us through a prism of refusal where answers lie in the gaps between quiet answers and songs of lament. We visited the mycelial network of trans* rage, grief, joy, and refusal, as demonstrated by this ritual harvest. This mycelium composes a trans* land and water epistemology that echoes in the stories gathered here. I have grounded the harvest process in vulnerability as a grieving researcher and practitioner during the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent loss of my lola. The windows of grief and rage allow further interdimensional intersection that reminds us we do not research or create in vacuum of the living or waking world. Various times and voices have been channeled in this movement, bringing us closer to the moment just before arrival with no promise of return. In this mix of memory, I have drawn up strategies for Indigi-Trans* thrivance connected to the creative practice that

underlies the co-research and fruiting rituals. In a reflection of trans* freedom work, we were reminded of our right to and rites of joy as trans* and Indigenous people; our pleasure is deliciously dangerous to colonial and capitalist systems of oppression. The collective agency of Indigi-Trans* people to transform is a power that comes from our restored relationships with land and water. We must steward (find our abundance and our limits, however transitory) this power with the support of our growing kinstellations (Recollet and Johnson, 2019).

Mokohuruhuru / Glowing Grandchild

Movement Unom (six) is a closing pattern, locking off the weave for a place to pause. The weave can be taken up again at another time and by another's hands, but for now, we can rest in the knowledge of our journey thus far. This is the time to find our position once again, gather and observe where we have arrived after being with the ritual harvest presented in this thesis. What did we have to adjust to keep listening, to stay open, or to maintain ground? An overview of the thesis gives us another chance to reflect on how we have changed, what still resonates or what fell silent. I will also look at the limitations of this thesis, describing their texture and how they focused the research or gave it an unexpected freedom. Beyond the embrace of our limits, I present a challenge to all listeners, but more specifically to trans* and Indigenous scholars to take up creative practice as an ancestral research technology, drawing upon our traditions of storytelling to inform a truly decolonial approach to representation and dissemination of our work. Creative practice can protect our knowledge as it moves through or around barriers to our Indigi-Trans* scholarship. I will also offer a few ways to tie off the cord for this kaupapa. We have time to give thanks, recognize the elemental bodies that continue to co-write this work and receive an invitation to cleanse (limpia) and close our listening bodies. Creative practice continues to take us through a process of consent as we choose how to close or depart from the wānanga within these pages. You are all welcome to return at any time, but for now, I encourage us to make space to vibrate and integrate.

I am now
sitting across from myself
on the other side of Waikato Te Awa
I am looking
reflecting my own gaze
we write to each other
sing to each other
confess a longing for each other
together, may we find the taaniko?
may we find the intricate and closing

as strong as we are beautiful
to gather the whenu, to anchor the child.

we present this korowai from both sides
of Waikato Te Awa
surging below the moment
Hinepūkohurangi lifts and settles
lifts and settles
lift and settle
come and find yourself
called Home.

"Shifting With the Tide"

Look down at your feet. Who and what do you see there? Are you sitting with your feet tucked underneath you? Are you standing in rock, soil, or marsh? Is there concrete and asphalt interrupting? Look down, look beneath, look below, look.

I am swaying, in the sand that is rapidly dissolving away from me–pulled by the outgoing tide. I am sinking deeper as the tide sucks and scoops away the grains. I sway to keep my balance because my feet are becoming the shore. Eventually, with great effort and grunting, I will pull one foot out and then another. Teeter down the way to dance a bit with the edges of Tangaroa's skirts, following their inhale and exhale with my steps. Again, I will try to stand 'still,' swaying as humans do to keep from falling in just yet. I am swaying on the shore, I am shifting with the tide.

"Kahore te ture i hanga pērā me te kūpenga hī ika, hei here, hei pupuri, engari, pērā i te tai nekeneke, hei arahi" (M. Szaszy, 1987). These words from Dame Mira Szaszy (Ngāti Kurī) still echo-locate my body along this thesis path (see p. 7 for her mokopuna's interpretation). As a displaced native and trans*person raised outside the traditions of my lands and waters, these words continue to give me hope. Listening to the tides with my steps and guided by intuition, I arrive at this final movement of *Listening at Dawn: Trans* Storywork for All My Relations*. It is through embodied memory and ritual play that we, co-researchers, storytellers, and co-creators,

find ourselves still at the center of ceremony–moving with the tide, moved by living traditions. I began this thesis with a desire to find our place as Two-Spirit and Indigi-Trans* people in ceremony, our place in our traditions and stories. I knew that we are not new or untraditional– we are made of our ancestors and therefore just as ancient or new. I was initially interested in proving ourselves traditional to our non-trans* relatives, but I was quickly redirected to focus on my healing and the thrivance of fellow Indigi-Trans* people. From this place of self-healing, I affirm and remind our trans* family that we are traditional and hold sacred knowledge. It is through a kappi (daystar) methodology, expressed by creative practice research, that I began this process of re-embodying our ancestral power of place at the center. There is still much more to be done in the realm of embodied Indigi-Trans* methodology and theory, but this is one of many tipu or seedlings, one step towards the continuation of a liminal whakapapa.

Step outside of this prismatic tipu, walk around and back again. You may have entered this prism through the fourth movement, the second movement, or even the sixth. You may have entered through the first movement and made a sequential journey. Whatever your path, we are now looking from the outside, into the space between. To undo any harm or unwind any confusion, I will start at this 'end' of the circle and work my way backwards. During the fifth movement, "Transness can only create aliveness," we experienced the sovereignty of trans* rage, grief and joy as labor positions and healing practices for trans* and native spaces. It is here that we witness the fruition of Indigi-trans* theory and methodology from elemental origins highlighted in a collective experience. In the fourth movement, "Bayanihan / Community Strength," we collectively located our ancestral lands and their liminal mapping of our bodies through the rituals of Indigi-Trans* co-researchers and storytellers. We also sat with the gifts of INDAK-KANIKANI and the Bahay Kubo project; public offerings of ritual chaos that took us into deeper layers of Vā, Ma, Te Kore and Nepantla. The third movement, "La Corona, La Llorona," showed us the tools used to begin ritual research practice in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and Indigenous, diasporic longing. We touched and handled these tools of self-healing with an appreciation for movement and oro. The second movement, "Magkakaugnay / Intra-Weaving," is the opening dance that demonstrated my search, fracture, and eventual refusal of theory. An

invitation to “get lost generously” (Akomolafe, 2021) is extended to all witness-participants during this second movement. Did you accept this invitation? Did you find an ara or path again? Finally, the first movement, “Kei Kōnei Ahau,” is the place where this circle opened–the place where my unknown and known merge to give us a physical portal into the space between, the tension that holds together a diasporic, native experience. These six movements create a space-time traveling vessel, weaving a human expression of liminality with elemental origins that know no human bounds. This is the story of transformational power embodied by Indigi-Trans* people, nourished in ancestral land-waters.

> *I recently presented my work to a group of second year university students who were studying decolonial methodologies. I am never sure of what I will say about my (co)research because it is a living, breathing being that will hide some limbs and extend others. After introducing what I have gathered of my origins, the first words to come forth were, “This work is for trans*people, foremost. For all trans*people around the world.” The korowai that is invoked by that statement gave me the assurance to continue telling a story that I knew wouldl rip open many minds and hearts.*

I have told a story of Indigenous sovereignty: the unyielding connection to land-water-flesh, despite displacement, assimilation, and genocide. I have told a story of Trans* sovereignty: the surrender to our land-water-flesh, allowing our bodies (of spirit) to transform for the liberation of ourselves and all our relations. I have told a story of Indigi-Trans* sovereignty: whakatipuranga o te mana me te tapu i te waenganui. Together, with co-researchers/storytellers, and co-creators, we have told these stories through ritual practice. By engaging in creative research, we have articulated our rage, grief and joy, giving our ancestral relationships new forms and avenues for movement, transformation. Together, we offer ritual embodiment as a form of creative research to the fields of Indigenous studies and Trans studies. We offer daystar-breaking-water

methodology to all artist-scholars who seek transformation, whether of macro systems (i.e. abolition, climate change) or of micro systems (i.e. rewiring nervous system, building community) and decompose barriers to land and water liberation. We bring our origins, the land (all their bones and placenta) back to our scholarship as we harness the power of our embodied waters and lands for the disruption and refusal of colonial knowledge-production. But we are not offering our body-lands just to disrupt a relatively young oppressor (white supremacist-capitalist-imperialism), instead we seek to activate the void where we rest so all people may regain a relationship with the unknown. This creative research momentarily lifts the veil of misrepresentation where Indigenous and trans* voices are spoken for without our consent or collaboration. There are very few research projects facilitated by and for Indigi-trans* people, in collaboration with our lands and waters, that draw on creative practice as their foundation. We offer an (un)knowing that blurs academic and creative borders by dancing as we always have: on the edge of the void, las fronteras, the skirts of Te Kore.

In this creative practice thesis, I have shared only what is appropriate (as decided by my community and our co-authors of spirit) given the current social and political climate of heightened transphobia in the U.S. and world. As I created this thesis, a barrage of anti-trans laws and bills are being written, fought, and passed within courts across the U.S. Although this is not new, many of these anti-trans bills continue to target our trans* children–young people who openly express and share their gifts of gender-transcendence. Threatening the health and safety of our children is also not new to us as Indigenous people and people of color, and it is just as important now to protect our trans* children as it was when our grandparents were stolen by boarding schools and missions. Colonial systems are within our mycelium, and it is up to each of us to recognize its scent / impulse and choose a different pathway that restores all our relationships, not just a few. The stories, knowledge and practices shared within this thesis are highlights of these restorative pathways open to all who wish to uproot transphobia from our Indigenous traditions and further decolonize our understanding of the unknown.

The harvest, processing, and re-imaginings are far from conclusive because the liminal space that guides this project moves free from a container, never maintaining completion for long. The fluid space upon which this kaupapa has been created cannot support a rigid structure of understanding, but it can move with the tides of deconstruction and creation. Using our ancestors' tools, Indigenous and Trans* scholars are tearing down the master's house (Lourde, 1979), but then what? Do we have the skills to create what we need to remain free without replicating domination over each other, land and through water? As scholar, visionary and Te Tiriti o Waitangi activist, Moana Jackson (2021) reflects:

> ...when people talk about decolonisation, I tend to talk more, again, about restoration. Successful restoration of a better and more human notion of relationships is in itself a decolonising act. (last section)

Do we know how to live respectfully, with each other, in the clearing? If we are compelled to build again, what and how are we building for future artists, warrior-healers, creators, storytellers? What will we create for our freedom today, let alone tomorrow?

A Collective Closing Ritual

As I sought answers to my questions above in the creation of this final movement, I opened myself to the closing ritual for this kaupapa. In line with the expectations of a creative practice thesis, I thought that I *should* create a final ritual (seen as a 'performance' by examiners) for the closing of this thesis; a way to present some of my harvest to my community and committee. I returned to Aotearoa, the birthplace of this kaupapa, hoping to offer something large, a grand culmination of all my ritual work for this thesis. As I wrote this movement and waited for the ritual to form, to direct me, I only received bits and pieces of ritual(s) which didn't seem to be of the same intention. Many rituals were blooming, at different paces and in different places, so I went down to the awa and offered what I knew to the tīpua, atua, and taniwha gathered there. I did not invite any others to these riverside rituals, I did not schedule it for examiners to observe. Indeed, a final ritual was in order, but not to fulfill a degree requirement, rather it was needed to give back to the whenua which co-authored this work. I was not allowed to film or photograph these rituals, and the audio which was recorded may never be named, but has certainly found its

way into the soundscapes you experience here. I have encountered kaitiaki and toa in these rituals who affirm rituals of refusal and remind us of ways to protect our wairua and mana, even while facilitating creative research within the academy.

In the tradition of Black fugitivity and Indigenous refusal, the culmination ritual was dispersed and stored within many bodies and desires. I was asked to participate in others' rituals of closing or opening and it was within the creative works of other Indigenous artists that the pieces of a culmination ritual surfaced. I began to recognize a pattern of energy woven through these rituals or performances led by others around me in tandem with the small rituals I offered to the unseen. I was invited to dance, move, and play with taonga pūoro in humbling combinations, already opening windows into another phase of collaboration. These invitations were an answer to the riverside rituals, echoing my gratitude and hunger for a future overflowing with honest creations. As I sought a ritual of closure for this kaupapa, I was being presented with a wero to continue the work in new interactions and deeper levels. Although I did not choose to create a 'final' ritual that could be documented and categorized for this project, a closing ritual has taken place along the banks of Waikato te Awa and within a collective Indigiqueer response to the desire for hā-oro and tūhononga. I rest this closing ritual in the trust we give to our elders and other storytellers: it is enough to remember aloud, to be heard and believed by the hearts of our community. Finding our ability to create beyond the permission of academic binaries is one of the gifts of this thesis and was not possible without recognizing the invitation of limits.

* *

Freedom Through Constraint: Research Limitations

the jute creaks delicate
scent of jojoba oil warmed into golden fibers
narrow inhale fill puku
careful to swell just below chest
thin fingers of jute wrap one, two

cross and under,
over and through
twist pull cinch. swipe under to check
rocking forward, push and catch to test
the hold is good.
tension is even.
Yes, this will do.

My creative practice research has unfolded within, under and around constraints that have resulted from limitations of time, institutions, mobility, and scope. The COVID-19 pandemic, which took hold of Aotearoa by March 2020, greatly shifted and shaped my work. My desire to approach research as ceremony–working through relationships with close friends and family–created a small and limited group of co-researchers and storytellers. Working within a Western, academic institution that has very limited resources for creative practice scholars, let alone Indigenous and trans* scholars, gave me the freedom to follow my vision, but without appropriate or consistent faculty support. A short program period of 3 to 5 years forced me to curb the scope of my research and be more discerning with my gathering and creative efforts. All these constraints on my (co)research yielded an interesting harvest of methods and data that could only have arisen from such a complex combination of pandemic, ceremonial research, and a finite period.

The inability to physically travel to meet with co-researchers or gather in-person with local community was a condition that birthed new forms of ritual that I had not anticipated. Relying upon an online platform for meeting and facilitating ritual did not feel true to my developing method of co-research, so I brought ritual practice beyond the screen by encouraging myself and my co-researchers to become more aware of our energetic bodies. We found new abilities and forms of articulation (relationship) across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa by syncing with each other and the land which we could not touch during the height of the pandemic. This profound language of body would not have developed so strongly or quickly if we had been able to meet in person and in the lands that nourished our ancestors. I am still curious about what alignment occurs

when co-researchers can work with each other and their lands in person, but our inability to travel encouraged our diasporic powers of lineage-access despite physical displacement. Such powers of time and space travel were cultivated by our ancestors, especially our disabled ancestors, our stationary or confined ancestors. They listened to our elemental relations to cross te moana and la tierra for knowledge, rongoa and greater connection. We dreamed and visioned, felt and danced our way across las fronteras del mar y tierra, mapping the routes that some of our relatives would soon follow. These shape-shifting and time-bending movements would become a pattern we could adjust as necessary to transcend the confines of colonial empire; shackles fashioned to break us from the land and waters who are us. In a counter-intuitive moment, the online platform of video conferencing forced us, co-researchers, to re-activate our ancestral tools of perception and connection.

The pandemic also ushered in a collective wave of grief that brought a painful dimension of this kaupapa, only relieved by a commitment to working with close friends and family of trans*, Indigi and POC origins. The choice to work with my close community largely shrank the number of co-researchers for this thesis, which decreased the overall amount of data from which I could draw patterns regarding Indigi-trans* powers of liminality. I accepted this as a limit to my harvest, especially following sustainable protocols for harvest–asking for and receiving only as much as I needed to fill the kete I would offer back to my community. I also wanted to be present, attentive, and respectful of what was given to me through the co-research and creative process, which is harder to maintain as the number of co-researchers increases. Working with my close trans* family also afforded me the freedom of trust, which is essential to an experimental and unknown ceremony of research. Together, we trusted in the process of co-research and re-imagining relationships with our body-lands by giving each other feedback and staying connected despite uncertainty. The tensegrity of re-imagining a kaupapa that locates trans* people in the center of ceremony is that I rarely felt certain of my actions, yet each step came naturally if I allowed shapes to unfold without imposing my agenda. This is a duet that I learned from my time as a bodyworker; facilitating the expression of bodies' stories by following their movements, not directing them towards what I believed to be correct or necessary. Although my co-researcher

group was small, thus limiting data, these trusted relationships provided a container of discernment where vulnerable knowledge could sprout.

Another limitation to my creative practice research was the number of times I was able to offer public, fruiting rituals. I offered fruiting rituals in response to collective shifts, governed by celestial bodies, such as the Maramataka (Māori lunar calendar) or solstices. Just as our ancestors offered rituals in response to seasons and elemental shifts, I found myself being compelled to create ceremonies in tandem with cosmic transitions. I noticed that these transitions were also being reflected in my communities and the global collective, affirming my timing and instinct that these rituals were appropriate. Although participant-witnesses wanted to witness more fruiting rituals because, like many audiences, they were conditioned to consume 'art,' I refused to create beyond what was necessary. I instead chose to take time to listen after each ceremony and understand what they offered this kaupapa of liminal methodologies. In the span of a year and a half (the time allotted for my 'field research'), I was able to offer two public rituals as COVID-19 continued to decrease safe access to gatherings. I am grateful that I was able to take time to deeply evaluate the ceremonies I could share, but I do feel that the data was greatly limited because I could not workshop my creative practices more in a live, public space. I wish I could have gathered more pieces from the liminal space that only opens in collective witness, but I am honored by what ceremonies I was allowed to share during this short span of time.

Maintaining my health and safety as an Indigi-Trans* student and scholar within a western, academic institution also impacted the breadth and depth of this thesis. My university lacked sufficient academic support for Indigenous, trans* or creative practice scholars, especially as many of the leading Indigenous faculty in my department left en masse (during the middle of my program) in protest of institutionalized racism at our university. These departures interrupted all the lives of Indigenous students at our university and continues to reverberate as we struggle to stay on course with our projects and not lose faith in our work beyond the white supremacist academy. Even inside my department, I encountered transphobia from faculty which challenged

me to understand the urgency of creative, trans* scholarship within Indigenous studies. I swallowed this transphobia within my department to protect what few Indigenous faculty we have left, but no artist or scholar should ever be forced to make this choice–not now, not twenty years ago, not ever. Not to be abused, my resilience as an Indigi-Trans* artist was sharpened during this program, and I have used it to strengthen my resolve to complete this sacred work.

Lastly, the time constraint of a three-to-four-year PhD program pushed me to narrow the scope of my work. Besides the inability to cover all creative and literary resources on Indigenous traditions of liminality or gender fluidity, there simply was not enough scholarly work published (only recently have more Indigi-Trans* publications been released) by and for Indigi-trans* people. Thus, I continue to cite kōrero, testimonio and stories shared with me by my community, ancestors, and land-waters. During this short program period, I could only download and process what is permissible from my network of living, dead, seen, and unseen relations. The refusals that I receive from my own community are intertwined with the timing of this thesis to create a scope that is both narrow and more focused. I focus on creative practice methodologies more than a particular research question. This is in part because I am more interested in practical applications of embodiment over mining theory from my communities. Our body-spirits create theory constantly, but this knowledge must remain protected just as our lives must be protected. To mitigate intellectual theft, I not only narrow my scope of research, but I also respect a refusal to be known. The time limit of my program allowed me to understand this refusal inherent to Indigenous research methodologies because I did not have enough time to decipher all that I received. As is characteristic of Indigenous Knowledge, some teachings simply will not be known until it is the appropriate time, regardless of how much time we have to learn.

Paso y Paso: wero / invitation for future co-creation 

Given all the limitations encountered during this creative practice research, I have been faced with many challenges, which I now share in the spirit of collective action. I call upon all trans* scholars, Indigenous scholars and the ones blessed to be at the intersection to tell our stories from our own sense of place, for our communities and without compromising ourselves. Tell our

stories so that no one is telling it for us; continuing to harm us through misrepresentation or misappropriation. I do not ask us to tell our stories for consumption by those who wish to profit from our otherness, or even to correct our colonizers. We do not tell our stories for those who are not ready to enter the contract of truly listening, undertaking responsibility for what is shared. We tell our stories as a part of legacy, continuing to weave it for ourselves (and all whom we contain) and for our relations (those who contain us). It is important to be for and by trans* people, for and by native people. Do not apologize for your discernment, for your arrow's path that cuts across and through, landing in the heart of our people. It is important that our work is not for everyone; this is the nature of medicine and healing. Our medicinal plant relations can help or harm, thus not all knowledge is meant to be shared or must be shared in specific forms. This is for the protection of ourselves as well as our listeners, but we do not have much control over the movement of mātauranga or knowledge. It will continue to use us as disseminators, but can we still care for ourselves in this divine crossing?

More specifically to this kaupapa, I urge all scholars, artists, caretakers, and movers (anyone moved by this thesis) to reflect on how we can approach our work through creative practice. How can we center creative practice as a methodology, generating theory, research, and true representation? If we are truly committed to decolonizing ourselves and our work, then we must allow our ancestors' ways of knowing and gathering to become the forefront of our approach, not just incorporated or acknowledged. Creative practice methodologies are just one way to prioritize our native technologies, but are we ready to risk our legibility to experiment with creative methods of research? It is not enough to just write about our ancestors' ways, we must also practice them through our research without compromise. Although the institutions that fund us may require us to uphold colonial agendas on the surface to receive our degrees or paycheck, we can lead with decolonial approaches in spaces beyond the academy. I challenge our community scholars to risk being unacceptable to the academy–too native, too femme, too sexy, too big, too loud, too smart, too intimidating, too quiet, too dark, too complex, too powerful. How would your research shape and who could it reach if we were unwilling and unable to compromise our reo tīpuna?

This call to be uncompromising is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of Indigenous or Trans* research, but at the intersection of such power lies the inability to compromise. Our work and play are a matter of life or death as Indigi-Trans* people. We cannot withhold, suppress, or distort our voices, just as we cannot repress our bodies' power to transform. To refuse self-actualization is a form of death and many Indigi-Trans* people who cannot live freely do die, whether at our own hands or the hands of others. We have no choice but to be authentic and battle-ready because there is no illusion of safety or access to hegemonic power for us. Even as more trans* people gain access to cis-privilege, we must remember that our trans* and Indigenous relatives are as diverse as the stars. Access for one is not access for all and in fact, many of us do not crave or need this access. We desire to tear down the door and the institutions they protect. We want to dance upon the land and sing to the waters that lay beneath, listening to our original instructions for re-imagining reciprocal relationships with our elemental tīpuna.

Thus, I am inviting scholars of any kind to move according to their original position–do you need to step forward, step back, step to the side, remain seated, tumble down or start crawling? I have offered one more sequence to the decolonial project of uprooting transphobia from our Indigenous ceremonies, finding Indigi-Trans* people at the center of liminal methodologies. There is more play and work to be shared by Indigi-Trans* artist-scholars towards a re-imagining of our ceremonies and reclamation of traditional practices within our communities. Aspects of this kaupapa that could be changed and co-researched by and Indigi-Trans* people include: increasing the number of co-researchers and fruiting rituals (grow the data), a deeper exploration of how oro re-members ancestral practice, facilitating on-site co-research rituals (in the ancestral lands/waters of co-researchers) and bringing the ritual research into small group practice. This kaupapa covers storytellers from original lands that span the world, centering a diasporic experience. What would people experience if these ritual research methods were applied to a group of gender-sacred people who all came from the same maunga or moana? What if the group was a mix of gender-sacred people from communities who have historically been in conflict? How can these methods of body-land listening offer restoration of relationships to people that

have forgotten their Indigenous origins? These healing methods can inspire further creative co-research with and by Indigi-Trans* people in our respective lands and waters.

I want to see our non-trans* relatives support trans*people's efforts to generate our own methodologies, working with and for our communities. This includes citing our work, uplifting our voices, and striving for trans* positive curriculums. Center the uncomfortable and feel carefully–do not go where you are not yet welcome. Heed our warning, stop and listen. I ask scholars to stop and listen. "What is the story that needs to be told?" (R. Chapman, personal communication, March 2022). Each person contains an infinite universe of knowledge–it is enough to tell just what you remember. It can take a lifetime to tell *one* perspective of the creation story we all continue to forget and remember.

Rainbows in the Desert

Yesterday morning, I woke up just in time to chase a rainbow for an hour across the desert lands of Cahuilla people. I had never seen a desert rainbow before and I knew they were announcing a change that only the locals (coyotes, jays, rabbits) would understand. The combination of mist, wind and piercing sun broadcast the coming rains. By midday, a torrential downpour had ensued and lasted into the night. Flash flood warnings interrupted my calls and I watched in awe as the sky darkened to a dusk light far before nightfall. I couldn't stop thinking of the rainbow I had chased on my morning run and how it remained for over an hour, slowly bleeding from crisp lines into a hovering aura. 'Manawa kaikioi,' I remembered. The heart that lingers. The power shared by Indigi-Trans* storytellers and Indigiqueer artists in this project is akin to this desert rainbow. Our joy, rage, grief and presence is the messenger of a paradigm shift that has already begun.

The voices shared in this thesis have traveled through many deaths and (re)births to reach us. They do not seek to change the realms of academic scholarship, for they exist beyond such temporary domains, but liminal beings change all who meet them. Trans* people have and will always exist, and we are coming into our power at earlier ages every day. We are gathering our kin in a call to keep up with us just as we have kept up with the changing faces of colonialism.

The ability to connect with traditions that lie waiting in our bones is not unique to Indigi-Trans* people, but our embodiments require us to activate these skills to survive anti-Native and anti-Trans* contexts of settler-capitalism. As massive climate change, political upheaval, and revolutions continue to sweep our lands, the visions and scholarship of Indigi-Trans* people blur binaries that keep white supremacist institutions in power. The shift away from prioritizing Eurocentric, heterosexual, and cisgendered histories or narratives of conquest has felt slow for those of us who live in bodies that threaten colonial capitalism every day. Yet, the intense backlash against trans and queer rights around the world is one indicator of how strong the paradigm shift has become. Our white, patriarchal relations may continue to cling to power, but time and space will continue to unfold. Indigi-Trans* people are one reflection of the vastness that awaits humanity on the other side of fear of the unknown.

"mother of that which cannot be mothered. mother who wants nothing and everything at the same time. she who gave birth to herself three times: 1. the miscarriage. 2. the shrunken world. 3. the aftermath."
(excerpt from "The Rez Sisters II" by Billy-Ray Belcourt)

Indigi-Trans* theory and methodologies offer scholars another way to restore relationships, not just decolonize our fields of study. While many decolonial scholars dismantle and deconstruct harmful institutions, Indigenous and Black Trans* Feminist scholars look to what will be built and woven from 'the aftermath'. Like rainbows, we appear before or after the rains, inspiring onlookers to remember what is possible when elements combine, when borders are blurred, when we look from a different angle of light. Centering the body with all its irrationality and miraculous nature is another way Indigi-Trans* scholarship offers a blueprint for creative practice research that circumvents colonial structures of research and extraction. Our work and play are truly undefinable except when appropriate, as dictated by the lands and waters that generate our stories, our theory. This act of sovereignty is an ongoing process that was demonstrated by the co-research and fruiting rituals; giving us only what we are ready or willing to receive as listeners. The storywork and ritual research gifted among these pages create the harvest that will illuminate our descendants' altars as they pray for another path home.

Tying off the Cord 

As I tie this bundle with many cycles of tikitiki cut and offered, I am humming prayers of gratitude to the whakapapa of scholarship, creative practice and vision that has led me to this place. I am remembering the many artists and knowledge-seekers who have paved creative and revolutionary paths for all movers and listeners to follow, but the underlying oro is the reo of the waters, the land, fire, winds, and the chorus of their breath between.

I thank Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, the ocean that gave birth to me through the islands fished up by Maui, the ocean that connects me to my whānau in Aotearoa, Hawai'i, Cebu, Coast Salish territories, and Tongva, Chumash lands. This moana holds all my dead and unborn, bears passage to our visions, dreams, desires, and fears. Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa wraps and binds, threads spinning thicker and thicker until we are gripped by their life-giving-taking breath. I give thanks to the waters who incubated some our first ancestors, fungi, and coral.

I thank Waikato te awa and the Duwamish River–two curving wairua of life pushing and rushing to feed their children. I have conceived and composed most of this thesis ki ngā tahataha o Waikato Te Awa, breathing their kohu i te ata hāpara and finding refuge in their waiata i te waenganui pō. I have been taught how to listen by the taniwha at every piko and in turn mourn the curves of the Duwamish River that were backfilled by concrete airfields. Waikato Te Awa has asked me about the Duwamish River–how can they be freed, how can they become fertile again and what do they want? The rivers ask me for silence and pause, to hear their sovereign movement.

I thank Mauna a Wakea, Mount Tahoma, and the mountain ranges of the Tongva peoples for sheltering me and sparing me. Some of these mountains are volcanic and will one day destroy the homes I have known at their feet, but for now they have allowed me to witness their changing bodies and inhale their cyclical scents. Mauna a Wakea teaches me about the mycelial network that our ancestors accessed to navigate huge waterscapes of consciousness. This mauna has

called me to be near them and continues to call on me, reminding me of my contract as a land and water protector–part of my role as a native son-daughter. Where once we sowed balance, we must also sow protection.

I give thanks to Uenuku, Ānuenue, and especially ānuenue kau pō (the lunar rainbow or rainbow of night). I give thanks to the wetlands that still sink my feet and cling to my eyelashes despite the farmland that has backfilled so much of the Waikato. I give thanks to the tidepools, edge caves, and ata hāpara gradients that show me my lineage as an in-between body, a shapeshifter. I give thanks to Tāwera and Kōpū, Tala, who have given me back my place in the middle. Ko koe ko au, ko au ko koe.

I began this journey from the center, the middle of loss giving way to grief giving way to rage giving way to joy giving way to new possibilities. I find myself here again, back at the center because this is my origin and my place of wā okioki. There is so much restoration and therefore decolonization to be experienced here in this origin, this space between there and then. Could this place be the present? My position has not changed, but my awareness and embodiment of it has deeply transformed. I am changed as I witness the movements of my elemental relatives and their reflections in my human relatives. Through our powers of observation, whole-body listening and response, we can return to our center, our whatumanawa, our iho matua.

Limpia y Cerrada

It is time to close, for now. Do we have permission to offer you La Cerrada (closing of the bones)?

Āe. Yes.

Thank you. Lay down flat, face up if you can, or on your belly or side. Breathe in the clouds migrating overhead or the soil exhaling below. Be prepared to be wrapped by the wide hands of a rebozo, a traditional woven cloth that curanderas and parterias use to birth us or bury us. Any color you want. The rebozo I hold for community is black with iridescent white threads spelling a hexagonal pattern that reminds me of Ilocano cloud motifs. But we need at least three or four

rebozos to cover the whole length of your or my body. One rebozo will slip underneath our ankles and calves, another under our hips, one under our shoulder and the last one underneath our neck and head. We can shimmy the rebozos until we find our place in the middle of each. Slowly the ends of the rebozo will be pulled up above us, creating a sling for our whole body, almost like a hammock, and gently we will be rocked side to side. Let us know if this is ok, it's ok to ask for adjustments or stop. After the rocking settles our nervous system into a longer tide, we will feel the rebozo begin to cross over each region of our body: wrapping our lower legs and feet into a snug hold, tightening across our hips to compress and allow the sacrum to release, creating a firm embrace around our shoulder and across our sternum, and enveloping our ears, our forehead, while being careful to keep our nose and mouth free to breathe. The ends of the rebozos will gently tuck underneath you, kept in place by your body weight. A protective cocoon as tight or as loose as you need, but a whole-body embrace. If you find this hold comforting, allow yourself to settle here, surrender to the darkness and stillness here. This is ritual burial so that we may remember.

Are you ready to re-emerge, to be released? Who are you now? Perhaps nothing and no one. Perfect. You are ready to return. Begin to find your breath, just noticing it, not controlling it. Hākina, hāputa. The rebozo ends will slowly come untucked, lifted out and unravel in blocks: First your shoulders, then your feet, now your hips and lastly, your head. Let us know if you would like to remain wrapped a bit longer in any region. Slowly ascending the steps of light, welcome back. We have been here all along, waiting for you. Tlazocamati hue!

It is time to close, for now. Do we have permission to offer you La Cerrada (closing of the bones)?

Kao. No.

Thank you. Here we place rongoa around your base, your trunk: offerings of kawa kawa, kōrari, koromiko, ruda, lemon balm. We light a small fire in our poposcomitl, the vessel for our prayers. Upon the charcoal, we place pinches of sweetgrass, sage (the kind from my desert), sweet pine

and tobacco. The smoke carries our prayers to creator(s), cleanses each other, and reawakens our connection with these rongoa. Hākina, hāputa. Let our mihi cross and weave in the unseen and unheard realms, silence, and stillness our shroud. If you desire, wrap your arms around yourself, touching opposite shoulder with opposite hand. Embrace yourself, give yourself the reverence and gratitude we each deserve, before extending it to each other. Aroha mai, aroha atu. Tlazocamati hue!

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Movement Unom, "Mokohuruhuru / Glowing Grandchild," is a ritual resting place for us to pause, reflect and depart. Indigi-Trans* methodologies of creative research blossom from a connection with elemental ancestors that locates gender-sacred people at the origin of human creation. With this awareness in our body, we have reviewed where the path of this thesis has traversed, seeing where we did not go, wondering about those trails that disappear around the corner or what water is heard underfoot. We have touched the chords that bind and provide the container within which this kaupapa was sculpted with attention to indulging a groove. From this awareness we have been given a wero, or challenge to continue the path of creative practice research, no matter what our discipline or thirst. We have been brought back to the crossroads where we have been asked to recognize how Indigenous research can replicate the colonial project by leaving our ancestral practices outside the academy. With creative practice, we can choose a different path to further decolonize (decompose) the academy by finding creative ways to bravely practice our ancestral technologies through our research. What are we willing to risk to meet our trans* scholars where they risk everyday by just existing? We were also presented with the choice to build from 'the aftermath', focusing our transcendental skills towards the future of freedom. To close, we have been given a few ways to clean ourselves off, fill ourselves with fresh water, seal ourselves with our own trusted hierbas, and depart in a loving way. We now know where the door is, all we must do is knock.

Appendix

Portals

Whenua Kore

" *Whenua kore* may, alongside the loss of land, also be about the loss of Māori thought, or at least the forcible suppression of it / I say there is essentially no difference between whenua and whakaaro, or thought-that-unifies / Whenua in this instance would be one way of referring to the substance of whakaaro, of thought (or un-thought), and in that way whenua nourishes our thinking" (Mika, 2021, p. 36). Mika goes on to observe that as colonized peoples, we are not *allowed* to reflect on the possibility of whenua and whakaaro as one. When did we ever obey or do only what was allowed by an invader system? We still have the ability to understand and practice the knowing of such truths--that we are the land and the land is us, therefore what we know and feel is also the land.

Bayo Akomolafe in conversation with Prentis Hemphill (2021):

"There are risks in being seen. There are risks in being noticed."

{Te Wheke: spends their whole life crafting the art of invisibility}

"I am led by questions.

Power: the excessive-ness, the embarrassing excess that spills over…
Entangled and embodied, enleagued and rhizomatic

It is always difficult to talk about home.
Why?
Because it always slips away.

All I know is that I'm getting further away from the plantation that owned my body.
Maybe you're already home in your found-ness, in your lostness."

and then, Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Tāwhirimatea

"Hokia ki ō maunga kia purea ai koe e ngā hau a Tāwhirimātea"

"Return to your mountains so that you can be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea"

-Whakatauki

I do not know who my mountains are--to whom do I return? To whom do we return to cleanse if our lola refused to tell us the name of her home village ("what does it matter, it was bombed anyway, no more, long gone")? If I find myself at the edge of your first mother's mountain, am I allowed to weep there, at her feet, and cut my hair? Where do I plant my hair. I bring offerings of medicine, seeds and songs that are of no use to you now, but keep them in case your children's children run to the hands of my former captors. But let's be real, my captors have been here too. Their tracks are unmistakable and take generations of water sculpting, fire dancing and wind planting to remember a shape that can host four-legged and finned life again. I know the tracks well just like the ones here inside my arm, on the inside of my thighs, the inside of my skull. They always swell and grow hot when my purpose draws near, threatening to expose my lineage of imprisonment, genealogical fracture, ombligo biohazard. Do you smell the sweet tick of 'unidentified' as I pass under and between? Tattered piña cloth, sadistic Spanish flourish translated by a relentless sun and nimble hand, my only inheritance:

unknown, unnamed, unmarked, unmade.

I let this cloth continue to tear with time: now it is four corners.

Each thunderstorm, I stretch the translucent pieces a little longer and a little wider, gathering the electric drops to spin new strands. They are gaining weight again, taking up my whole burrow and spilling through the hole above me. Almost, just, big enough to make me wrap me, each toe and ear, each eyelash...I am creating with this inheritance, this last blessing you call pittance. I am becoming known, named, marked, and made by a knowledge that answers only to those left behind. We never learned how to discern fear, there was no time. With scar-studded tongue, I ask permission to place my bundle here and grow my hair under the curling arms of kōru. When my hair reaches my heart, I will pack my bundle, perhaps more compact than before, and fly back to the last house my lola swept: 1808 E. Cherry St. It's across the street from the DHS office where my friends wait for food stamps, around the corner from what was the food bank where grandmas wait with strollers to carry cabbage, a block down from Immaculate Conception Church where my sister and I were anointed with olive oil, balsam and freshwater, where there waits a small cherry tree that is hollow, but flowers every early spring and used to wear a hand-painted sign that chanted,

"God is Love."

Yea, that house. And from my lola's bedroom window, where she spies all our mistakes and tugs on the lord's ear even harder, I can see Mount Tahoma if the clouds break their embrace. They are our sleeping volcano and her children are the Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Yakama, Puyallup, Taidapam and more named, known, loved. I will bring your questions and

kindness back with me, lay them upon my lola's altar and create another meeting house for all our ancestors to gather, to rest and to fortify for the journey ahead.

and then, Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Matariki

"Matariki kaainga kore."
-Whakatauki

Homeless Matariki. Matariki without homeland. Matariki homeland void. Matariki homeland nothingness. Te Kōre Matariki homeless. Kainga Matariki without land. realm of potential being

Matariki travels with the recently deceased, ushering them to the stars, travel companion of the dead, nomadic and moving, without settlement, but not without home. Matariki is the guide home for so many, whether it is Polynesian sea-voyagers or the spirits of our ancestors, Matariki knows the way home despite being observed as "homeless."

Homeless natives. Landless natives. Dislocated and relocated natives. How do we know our way home when it has become the slow-sometimes-faster-dance of the stars? Is this where honu and hoku intersect? We carry our homes on our back, wrapped as armor about our ribs, painted the color of night on one side and the blush of dawn underneath. "Adapt or die," is that the mantra? Some of us chose to die, to fight from the other side. Allow tradition to breathe, to move and expand or contract as the fish net on the tide, lest we lose that which sustains us--the essence of our ways, our ancestral spirit. While our elders are now queuing up to be ushered by Matariki en masse due to the pandemic, will we remember what they taught us and more importantly, what they didn't teach us? What they didn't know yet or hadn't remembered or were too young to change. We can listen to our homes, whakairo etched inside our shells, pūngao oro in our femurs, watch how they shimmer in our dreams, ask each other and compare, tessellate a new pathway for ritual. This is how we know the way home, the way back to ourselves, the practices that feed us while floating on the water or in the stars.

and then, Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Aztlan

I taught my friends how to dance
"permiso"
footsteps twirling
asking for permission
to dance another prayer
another flower of memory

my dad was part of a track and field team called "Aztlan" when he was attending Cal State LA back in the 70s. when I ask him about why it was called that, he just remembers that it was the promise land, the place to be, the place to go. the place they were running to in every event and every marathon. the place created by every step closer to home.

I still don't know where it is
this place everyone calls 'home'
I know I feel it
in the smooth stone arms
of cliff tide pools
the warm breeze stippling my belly
as I become the face of the sun
I know I feel it
when I begin to speak
out of turn, slicing treaties
never translated, signed or accepted,
when we shriek and howl indoors
connecting captive with fugitive
we didn't leave you behind.

no one told me where we came from
how we came to be
I wasn't told enough origin stories
to know what questions to ask.
what will I tell you
when you finally arrive or
return?
where will I call home
and what names will I know
by then?
will Aztlan still exist in hope
or will they have broken all the borders.

Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Wai / Danum

Gustamo tubig? danum?

He inu wai mōu?

Did you eat?

Kei te hiakai koe?

come in, come in, let's eat!
Haere mai e kare, mangan tayon!

we are thirsty for connection, thirsty for faces of rain–Tlaloctehcuhtli–el licor de la tierra. we are thirsty for each other, the memories we keep pulsing through our lungs, the reflections we cannot find anywhere else on earth. we are drowning in the thirst for nourishment that can caress or destroy. what's your mood?

the waves that curled us into a shape everlasting
the yearning, desire, delicious fear
that brings us closer to ourselves
is the key
the portal
step through, step through
the time is now.

there is a shift occurring:
a repatterning of growth
we need your attention
and trust
no matter what the outcome.

Choose one, two or all three places and enter:

Oro

The world of tāonga pūoro, the singing treasures of Aotearoa, opened to me shortly after I began this research journey. I was initially drawn to the hue, or the ipu / gourd, and the vibrations they gave back when someone (wind or human) blew breath across an opening in their body. The low frequencies, the oro that resonated from the belly of hue caught my attention immediately and I craved to be near them. The hue, an embodiment of Hine-pū-te-hue, led me on a journey into the family of tāonga pūoro and many practitioners who cherish them by creating music with them. I am still very nascent in this world of oro from a Te Ao Māori perspective and I want to share a little bit about the healing that tāonga pūoro has brought to me as iwi taketake and manuhiri in Aotearoa.

My love of hue and desire to play with them pushed me to ask around my new friends and community for connections to tāonga pūoro practitioners. Instead, I was led directly to the source: kaumātua who grow hue from kākano. As an assimilated, upper-middle class, city kid growing up in the U.S., I have not had a lot of experience with growing or making what sustains me. I have mostly accessed food or shelter or clothing because I had the money to buy these things, not questioning where they came from or how they were made. Even though I helped my lola make gardening tools from trash and save every scrap of glass or plastic for another use, I still have difficulty remembering that I have the power to create from my surroundings. Thus, when I was connected to kaumātua who grew hue, I was given a strong reminder that if I want to connect with a body of knowledge, I must first put in the work. The work and patience of growing hue prepared me for learning more about Hine-pū-te-hue and gave me back my love and power of creation.

As I learned to sow, plant and grow hue alongside new whānau, the tāonga pūoro family began to enter my awareness and change me on an unconscious level. Most of the pūoro that I have had the pleasure of meeting so far require breath to co-create oro, or they require rhythmic movement and grounding that connects me to my breath as a stabilizing force. Creating oro with tāonga pūoro has largely become a form of breathwork practice, aligned with my somatic

practice for this thesis. Creating with pūoro has also become a playful practice, which is incredibly healing for me as a trained Western classical musician.

The training I endured to become a classical pianist and vocalist in the Western classical tradition was another way that my body and voice was colonized, molding my vocal and physical expression into a Euro-centric standard of beauty. As a young person, I didn't know there were other traditions of music and sound that could be accessible to me except for Western classical music and jazz. I was always in love with jazz, but was told (by a white instructor) that I needed at least a decade of Western classical training before I could touch jazz music. Although theory fundamentals are helpful for entering jazz music, this Western classical requirement could not have been further from the truth. By the time I was allowed to touch jazz, my entire body (spirit, mind) had been wired to play and perform the passion of a white composer with whom I had creative connection. I performed Western classical music well, but I knew it was not for me. Whenever I heard Flamenco vocals or Eastern classical vocals, I heard glimmers of vocal possibilities that resonated with my entire being. I heard the ability of the voice to communicate across all experience, even across species. I heard grief and rage, I heard all the scratches and rasps, I heard all the flat and sharp, I heard all the colors that were not allowed in the opera world.

I was finally freed from the racist world of opera when I said yes to my inevitable transformation as a bakla and two-spirit/ed person. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) took away my voice and what felt like my superpower in exchange for a voice that refused to be desireable or legible by Western ears. Although I continued to train vocally through my first year of HRT, eventually I stopped singing. It was not until I was opened back up by spoken word and other vocal arts that I found a place for my voice to play again. Even then, my voice only came out during poetry readings, ritual performances, or ceremonies with my native community. Tāonga pūoro tapped back into my breath, my source of voice, and invited me to play in new ways that began to heal my body from Western classical training. The power of play continues to amaze and inspire me as a creative researcher and practitioner.

When I first started to play with tāonga pūoro, other practitioners would coach me through different ways of creating certain reo, or voices, with the pūoro. As I struggled to create different reo, I would always find new oro and sounds along the way. My practitioner friends encouraged all these sounds, incorporating them into their own music and also respecting these sounds as what the pūoro wanted to share in any given moment. Sometimes pūoro would not create any reo and I learned that as a form of refusal from the pūoro. Such silences or refusals were often co-created by me or whomever was playing, or they were influenced by timing, setting, and purpose. I've continued to learn about the specific roles of some pūoro as they help to usher in specific moments in ceremony or stages of life. Practitioners can invoke these energies by playing with certain pūoro at any time, but sometimes pūoro choose a different way–reminding us that music is a co-creation.

The time I have spent learning new reo with tāonga pūoro has brought forward many emotions and states of being that needed to be processed and released. Like other somatic practices, the breathwork required to create with pūoro pulled out trauma that had been stored in my tissue, organs, and nervous system. It was only after I paused to notice a pattern of release that I became aware of the healing work that I was receiving each time I played with pūoro. The slow, internal shift that followed such release allowed me to become more playful and curious with sound, bringing me into a new relationship to music and composition.

Because tāonga pūoro had returned the love and curiosity of sound to me, I began to create soundscapes. Much like the heightened sensitivity in my hands after giving bodywork, I also began to experience a heightened awareness of sounds after playing more with pūoro. Now, every sound is interesting to me and has potential for becoming another texture or color in a soundscape. As a result, I have also become curious about Indigenous traditions of music and sound from my ancestral lands, especially the archipelago of present-day Philippines. Like our languages, I have already come across connections and similarities in traditional instruments that have traveled across our islands in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. Much like how te reo Māori has opened

me back up to learning the native tongues in my lineage, tāonga pūoro has given me permission to seek and learn about my native music. I am now about a month into learning to play the Kulintang, a traditional gong instrument from the Southern provinces in the Philippines and I'm excited to share what I'm learning with my tāonga pūoro family in Aotearoa.

Glossary

All te reo Māori definitions are adapted from Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz), sometimes in combination with definitions shared with me by my kaiako. All Hawaiian definitions are adapted from Ulukau Hawaiian Dictionary (wehewehe.org). Filipino definitions come from personal and familial understandings and will include dialect origin if possible. Definitions of sacred tools or medicines are intentionally short and lack specificity to protect Indigenous Knowledge.

Angiangi: gentle breeze, bearded lichen (Usnea); a lichen that grows on sick or dying trees due to the pre-existing loss of canopy leaves, allowing for greater photosynthesis by the lichen's algae. It is a combination of green or orange alagae covering a white elastic-like fungus thread through the middle. Was used extensively as an absorbant and for nappies and sanitary pads, and to prevent and treat infection. It makes an excellent antibiotic or antifungal application.

Ānuenue: rainbow; symbolized the presence of gods or chiefs. Rainbow fragment, ʻōnohi, ʻōnohi ʻula, pūloʻu, ala muku. Greenish rainbow, hakahakaea (rare). Earth-clinging rainbow, uakoko, lehopulu. Standing rainbow shaft, kāhili. Rainbow around sun or moon, luahoano, luakālai, luakālai lani. Rainbow-sparkling rain, uakoko. Lunar rainbow, ānuenue kau pō; pō mākole (night of lunar rainbow). Barely visible rainbow, punakea.

ʻ*Awa*: The kava (Piper methysticum), a shrub 1.2 to 3.5 m tall with green jointed stems and heart-shaped leaves, native to Pacific islands, the root being the source of a drink of the same name used in ceremonies (Neal 291), prepared formerly by chewing, later by pounding. The comminuted particles were mixed with water and strained. Kava was also used medicinally. Kupu ʻawa (FS 57), to perform ceremony of offering kava to the gods [an unusual reference, as kava was not taken ceremonially, as in Samoa]. ʻAwa kau lāʻau, the tree-resting kava, growing in tree crotches and famous in poetry concerning Puna, Hawaiʻi.

Bahay: traditional Filipino house or hut, usually built of bamboo

Bakla: Cebuano word meaning gay (or femme) person assigned male at birth. This word still carries negative connotations (like the word “fag”) and has also been in a process of reclamation by gay and queer Filipinx people. This word can also refer to an entire gender that is beyond babae (woman) or lalakay (man) and shows a combination of these two words resulting in another possibility.

Banig: traditional Filipino woven mat, usually of pandanus, buri or reed leaves.

Chalchuihuitlicue: Azteca deity of fresh water, springs, lakes, rivers, and all underground waters

‘Ewalu maka: ‘ewalu maka o ke keiki pua‘a a Hina, the eight eyes of the pig-child of Hina (eight was a sacred or formulistic number)

Fa'afafine: Samoan word for women who were born assigned male at birth

Hā (-puta, -kina): breath, (in, out)

Hauora: health

Hirstorical: a genderful version of the word ’historical’ (replaced ‘his-‘ with ‘hirs-‘)

Iho: heart, essence, inside, inner core, kernel, pith of a tree, essential quality, nature, umbilical cord (middle portion). Iho matua can refer to the cord or connection passed down from parents (sky and earth).

Irawhiti: transgender

Kai: food, meal

Kaiako: teacher, instructor

Kanikani: to dance

Kappi: crab, tradition motif represents the islands fished up by the hooks of Maui

Karanga: formal call, ceremonial call, welcome call, call - a ceremonial call of welcome to visitors onto a marae, or equivalent venue, at the start of a pōwhiri. The term is also used for the responses from the visiting group to the tangata whenua call. Karanga follow a format which includes addressing and greeting each other and the people they are representing and paying tribute to the dead, especially those who have died recently. The purpose of the occasion is also addressed. Skilled kaikaranga are able to use eloquent language and metaphor and to encapsulate important information about the group and the purpose of the visit.

Kaupapa: layer, purpose, topic, theme, initiative

Kete: basket, kit

Kōhatu: stone

Magkakaugnay: Tagalog word meaning interconnected or related

Manawa: heart (of a person), heart (seat of affections), patience, tolerance, breath

Manawa kaikioi: the heart that lingers

Mananabang: Cebuano word for traditional midwife

Manghihilot: hands-on healing art from the Philippines that involves intuition and massage, can also refer to a practitioner of this art

Manong: Ilocano word for the first born assigned-male child of a family, usually used to refer to older male relatives (brothers, uncles, cousins) of extended families.

Manuhiri: visitor, guest

Mārae:

Mārama:

Matauranga: knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill

Mauri: life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions - the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located.

Mau rākau: to weild weapons, Māori weaponry

Maxtla: a traditional garment worn by danzantes in Danza Azteca ceremonies, usually worn by warriors and is associated with masculine energies.

Mo'olelo: "a diverse collection of stories, histories, prophecies, songs, poems, chants and genealogies that are written, spoken, sung, chanted and felt" (Heolimeleikalani Osorio 2018, p. 18).

Muka: prepared fiber of harakeke (also known as a type of flax plant), often used to create rope, fine weaving or embroidery such as tāniko, and can also be used to tie off the umbilical cord.

Na'au: Intestines, bowels, guts; mind, heart, affections; of the heart or mind; mood, temper, feelings.

Nau mai: welcome!

Ngākau: seat of affections, heart, mind, soul

Ngaru: wave (of the sea)

Non-binary: referring to the gender experience and expression that is beyond the colonial binary of female or male, this can include fluidity between, around and beyond the binary or a refusal of the binary altogether.

Okioki: to rest, pause

Oro: (v) to resound, echo, resonate, (n) sound, rumble, note.

Pasifika: Pacific Island people, Indigenous people of the Pacific Islands living in Aotearoa-NZ

Pono: to be true, valid, honest, genuine, sincere

Poposcomitl: a traditional clay vessel (usually small enough to be carried in one hand) used in Danza Azteca ceremonies to hold the ceremonial fire and burn traditional medicines.

QTBIPOC: Queer, Trans*, Black, Indigenous, People of Color

Raranga: (v) to weave or plait, (n), weaving

Rā: sun

Reo: voice, sound, language, dialect, tongue, speech

Rere: to fly, flow, flee, leap, escape, go into action (any gliding movement), rush, run, race, descend.

Rongoa: remedy, medicine, cure, treatment, solution (to a problem), tonic

Rōpū: group, part of people, party, committee

Tāia: to print, to carve or etch, to apply moko or tattoo

Tala: Tagalog deity of morning and evening star

Tamāriki: children

Tangata whenua: local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried.

Takatāpui: 'intimate companion of the same sex' in reference to story of Tūtānakai & Tiki, indicates Maori lineage & connection as well as sexual orientation. "The term takatāpui serves a dual purpose for those people who claim it as a term to describe their identity. It has a cultural dimension that allows people to gain a strong sense of their cultural origins. And it also has a dimension that helps in understanding the sexual component of one's make-up. As such, the term takatāpui has greater relevance and meaning for Māori that does the word gay, a word that derives from Western paradigms of looking at the world" (Hutchings & Aspin 2007, 164).

Taonga: treasure, anything prized - applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.

Tapu: be sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden, under atua (godly) protection

Tāwera: Venus as night or morning star—the second planet from the sun in our solar system. The brightest celestial body after the sun and moon. Also known as Meremere-tū-ahiahi.

Te ao Māori: Māori cosmology and world of knowledge

Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa: Pacific ocean

Te reo rangatira: chief language of Aotearoa-NZ (Māori language)

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao: the faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Tika: to be correct, true, fair, accurate

Tikitiki: topknot

tino rangatiratanga: self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, rule, control, power

Tīpua: strange being, demon, superhero

Tīpuna: ancestors, grandparents

Toa: (v) to be brave, (n) warrior

Tohutohu: direction, advice, instruction, sign, mark, symbol

Tōiriiri: to resound, tingle, vibrate, resonate, reverberate.

Trans: to exercise the power to change from one gender to another, also an umbrella term for all people and beings who have or continue to experience different genders other than what they were assigned at birth.

*Trans**: "For my part, I now prefer the term "trans*" because it holds open the meaning of the term and refuses to deliver certainty through the act of naming. The asterisk modifies the meaning of transitivity by refusing to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity. The asterisk holds off the certainty of diagnosis; it keeps at bay any sense of knowing in advance what the meaning of this or that gender-variant form may be, and perhaps most importantly, it makes trans* people the authors of their own categorizations" (Halberstam, 2018, 3rd paragraph).

tūhononga: connection, cluster

tuku: to release, relinquish, grant, gift

Two-Spirit(ed): "*Two-Spirit*, however, was not proposed to satisfy any scientific desire for close correlation between analytical categories and Indigenous truth. Instead, it was designed as a logic and method to confound such desires. Displacing prior generation's interest in anthropological authority, *Two-Spirit* became frustrating, complicating, and exciting by shifting the terms on which knowledge of Indigenous people would be produced and debated" (Driskill, 2011, p. 17).

Uenuku: rainbow

Uku: clay

Wā: time, season, period of time, interval, term, duration

Waharoa: entrance to a pā, gateway, main entranceway

Waikaremoana: a lake in the Te Urewera mountain range, under guardianship of the Ngāi Tūhoe tribal group.

Wairua: spirit, soul - spirit of a person which exists beyond death. It is the non-physical spirit, distinct from the body and the mauri. To some, the wairua resides in the heart or mind of someone while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body.

Wānanga: tribal knowledge, lore, learning—important traditional cultural, religious, historical, genealogical and philosophical knowledge.

Wero: challenge

Whakanoa: to remove tapu - to free things that have the extensions of tapu, but it does not affect intrinsic tapu.

Whakapapa: genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent – reciting whakapapa was, and is, an important skill and reflected the importance of genealogies in Māori society in terms of leadership, land and fishing rights, kinship and status. It is central to all Māori institutions.

Whakatauki: proverb, formulaic saying, cryptic saying, aphorism

Whānau: extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members.

Whare: house, building, residence, dwelling, habitation, shed, hut

Whāriki: floor mat, ground cover

Whatumanawa: kidney, seat of emotions, heart, mind, bowels (of the earth)

Whiro: moon on the first night of the lunar month - for some tribes (e.g. Te Whānau-ā-Apanui) this is the sixteenth night of the lunar month - unsuitable day for planting and fishing, but good for eeling.

Vientre: womb, uterus, whare tangata

Bibliography

A note on bibliography

A works cited list is customary for a doctoral dissertation, but I have chosen to provide a bibliography instead. It is important for me to acknowledge many other sources of knowledge that have informed and influenced my thesis, even if I have not directly quoted or cited them in my work. As an Indigenous researcher and scholar, I uplift the lineage and network of knowledge that creates the opening for my work and exploration. It is out of respect for this unseen web that I acknowledge as many sources as I can, although it is impossible to create a complete record here. Below, you will find sources that I cited within the thesis in addition to other literature, art, music, and media that has guided my thesis over the last four years.

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