

# “To Breathe the Akua”: Aloha ‘Āina in the Poetry and Activism of Haunani-Kay Trask

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FIGURE 1. He'eia Uli, O'ahu, 2014. Dr. Trask made her home along the He'eia wetlands. Photo by Kalei Nu'ubiwa.

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The green wetlands of He'ēia Uli extend along the foot of the Kawahakūmanō ridgeline in the Ko'olau mountain range, salt marshes fringed by taro pondfield terraces and fed by He'ēia Stream. When I look out across the wetlands, I hear the words of Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask's luminous poem "He'ēia": "across the marsh / our lives flood." "He'ēia" is a love song honoring the quiet of the grassy wetlands and the historic flooding of the wetlands. Dr. Trask writes about how the view of the wetlands from her deck inspired her to write to protect lands and waters in Hawai'i: "Nature in captivity, in human captivity. A perversion of the natural order. I think of what we must do, as a species. I doubt we have the will to do it. But some of us already use our lives in trying to stop predation, to restore the natural order. What else can we do? What else could we choose to do? Heartened by this tender resolution, I look out from my writing table to the comforting wetlands beyond. The sky is a blowing mass of darkening clouds. Beyond the fertile lava crevices of the Ko'olau mountains, a dying sun fades away. Just now, great billows of rain refresh the earth, releasing the cool smelling mud of mango and breadfruit trees. A cleansed moment. A nourishing feeling. I lean back and ponder the coming beauty of night."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Trask's words evoke her intimate pilina (relationship) with the lands and waters of He'ēia. We can imagine the waters that flow from the mountain streams and springs flooding the land. I ka wā ma mua, in earlier times, Kānaka Maoli laid out terraced lo'i kalo (taro pondfields) along this path of water.<sup>2</sup> Some of the water from the stream was moved to the 'auwai, man-made waterways that fed each lo'i, helping to diffuse the force of the stream waters.<sup>3</sup> Mahi'ai, then, designed the 'auwai to split the impact of the heavy rush of waters, and the waters nourished the kalo before being carried back to the stream, rich with nutrients for the estuaries that served as nurseries for the baby fish at the fishpond, Hale o Meheanu.

Those who know Dr. Trask as a fierce activist and scholar will not be surprised to learn that she lived near the site of a historic battle where powerful women warriors stood in protection of Kualoa and the cliffs of Palikū, the ancestral lands of the akua, the deity or elemental form, Haumea.<sup>4</sup> Haumea is renowned as the feminine principle who embodies the natural processes of birthing and regeneration. As the chant "Haumea lāua 'o Moemoea'ali'i" explains, Haumea gives birth to the following deities: Kamohoali'i, from her fontanel; Kānehekili, from the mouth; Kauilanuimākehāikalani, from the eyes; Kūha'imoana, from the ears; Kānemiloha'i, from the right palm; Leho, from the knuckles; Kāneikōkala, from her fingers; Nāmakaokaha'i, from the chest; Pelehonuamea, from "the usual place of people"; Kapō'ulakīna'u, from the knees; Kapōkohelele, from the ankles; Hī'iakalukalu, from the toes; Hī'iakakuilei, from her feet; and Hī'iakaikapoliopole, from her palms in the shape of an egg.<sup>5</sup>

One of Haumea's manifestations is Papahānaumoku, She Who Is the Foundation Birthing Islands. As recounted by Joseph Moku'ōhai Poepoe in "Ka Moolelo o ko Wakea ma Noho ana ma Kalihi," a storied history published serially in 1906 in the Hawaiian language newspapers, Haumea stands before her ancestral cliffs of Palikū against Kumuhonu's army. At this time, she multiplies herself into the "kino wahine lehulehu o Haumea," her multitudinous women bodies, thousands of beautiful women who flicker between their kanaka (human) and mo'ó (reptilian water deity) kino lau

(bodily forms).<sup>6</sup> The women include the beloved mo’o Hauwahine and Meheanu of the windward Ko’olaupoko district, and as they pack the plains, they choose as their weapons kukui nuts, from whose oils burn the light of knowledge. Kumuhonua’s army marches across the plains of the Ko’olau, and his men underestimate these beautiful women. As they scoff at “ka poe maka palupalu (the beautiful women with soft eyes),” the women attack by launching kukui nuts at the warriors, striking the men on their foreheads and killing each warrior in a contest of knowledge. The line of fierce women protecting their kulāiwi (plain of bones or ancestral lands) reminds me of the thousands of daughters who have been birthed under Dr. Trask’s instruction and leadership. In her own poem “Sons,” Dr. Trask embodies Haumea as she speaks of being “slyly reproductive,” birthing books, history, politics and ideas, carrying the daughters who lead the lāhui.

Dr. Trask’s poem “He’eia” focuses on the place named for the aftermath of this battle.<sup>7</sup> By identifying her home in the marsh of He’eia Uli, the speaker narrows the broader district of Ko’olaupoko to reclaim the name of her own home, which had for many years been eclipsed by the larger place name “Kāne’ohe.” In 2011, signs on O’ahu identifying and reclaiming smaller ahupua’a were erected by the Ko’olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club with the Kailua and Waimānalo Hawaiian Civic Clubs.<sup>8</sup> That act opened up knowledge that had been locked away in place names forgotten by many. If we trace the meaning of the place name “He’eia,” we see that the poem refers to “a dream of return,” a flooding, and a wondrous resurgence. Soon after Haumea and Wākea’s victory against Kumuhonua, a tidal wave rose up and Haumea, Wākea, and their followers “he’e ‘ia,” “were swept,” to sea.<sup>9</sup> They swam in the deep waters, and Kamoawa, the kahuna, performed a ceremony by catching a humuhumunukunukuapua’a, a pig-snouted fish, sticking its head into Wākea’s cupped hands to represent a pig offering to the heiau (altar). The people swam around Wākea in a procession, and the sea washed them ashore on Mokukāpapa, an island outside of Kahalu’u. Haumea fetched Olopana’s grandson to raise him at Palikū and named him He’eia (a contraction of he’e ‘ia). Poepoe explains:

I nei hoi hou ana mai; akahi no ua wahine hoopahaohao nei a kii i ke keiki moopuna a Olopana, a hoihoi mai la a noho pu me lakou; a ua kaheia kona inoa o Heeia. O ke kumu o ke kapaia ana o ua keiki moopuna la a Olopana, oia ka Hee ana o ua o Haumea, me Wakea kana kane, ame ko laua mau ohua apau iloko o ke opu o ke kai.<sup>10</sup>

When they returned, it was the first time this wondrous woman fetched the grandchild of Olopana, and returned with him so that he could live with them; he was called by his name Heeia. The reason that Olopana’s grandson was called this is because of the washing out (ka he’e ‘ana) of Haumea, Wākea, her kāne, and all of their attendants into the belly of the sea.<sup>11</sup>

In this way, the title of the poem signals that the flooding is a resurgence, and after Kānaka are swept out to sea, a resurgence would swell and bring them back victorious to shore.

Dr. Trask's scholarship and poetry grew out of her profound understanding that the mo'olelo, chants, and songs about the akua, the deities who are the elemental phenomena or energies, recorded ancestral knowledges that would inspire the lāhui to move into a decolonial future. This historical prophecy of the victorious return of the people that Dr. Trask alludes to in her poem "He'ēia" also unfolded in contemporary times in her own aloha 'āina activism as she stood, like the many Haumea wāhine, to protect the lands and waters of He'ēia. In 1988, a year after Dr. Trask and her sister Mililani Trask founded Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, the largest Native Hawaiian sovereignty initiative with over twenty-five thousand members, Dr. Trask and her partner, Dr. David Stannard, were engaged in another battle to protect their home on the edge of the He'ēia wetlands. A Japanese multinational corporation had sought to fill in the wetlands to develop a golf course. Many of the farmers in the area opposed the golf course because they knew it would have a toxic effect on lands and waters. The waters from the wetlands also feed the He'ēia stream and the great fishpond known as Hale o Meheanu, which had stood for at least eight hundred years. Dr. Trask worked in the Kūpa'a He'ēia movement to protect the wetlands, and that land struggle illustrates one of the great successes of community activism. The proposal to develop the He'ēia wetlands into an exclusive residential community with a marina and a golf course was blocked, and the fishpond stands to this day, feeding the people as a source of seafood, an educational center, and a symbol for a decolonial future.

I write this essay from Kanaka Maoli lands in He'ēia Uli, not far from where Dr. Trask made her home. I am a fourth-generation Japanese settler, and Dr. Trask was my great teacher for over twenty years. True reciprocity means a life for a life: we give our breath for this place, whether in chant or in testimony, on the front lines in settler courts and against settler law enforcement armed with tear gas and sound cannons. Where Kānaka Maoli are genealogically descended from Papahānaumoku, those of us who are not Kanaka Maoli are settlers whose ancestral lands lie elsewhere. As settlers, we have a kuleana to the lands that we occupy and to the lāhui Hawai'i (Hawaiian collective of peoples). The kuleana of reciprocity means standing on the front lines for lands and waters and for Kanaka Maoli political independence from US occupation.

The lāhui Hawai'i is based on aloha 'āina, a deep and abiding love for 'āina (lands, seas, and skies that feed physically, spiritually, and intellectually.) Aloha 'āina is born out of a genealogical relationship with the akua (elemental forms): Kānaka Maoli trace their origins to several genealogies, one of the most well-known of which is the Kumulipo, a mele ko'ihonua (chant of creation) that traces the genealogy of Kānaka back to the emergence of life out of Pō, the deepest darkness out of which all life emerges. Out of the fiery heat and the walewale (primordial slime) of Pō emerge Kumulipo (Source of life) and Pō'ele (Dark night), then the coral polyp, the shellfish, the seaweeds and the grasses, the fishes, the vines, the trees and shrubs, the birds, the insects, the reptiles, the animals of the sea and the land, the landforms and cliffs, the stars hung in space. Kānaka are descended from Papahānaumoku and Wākea. From their union is born a daughter Ho'ohōkūkalani, and from the union of Wākea and Ho'ohōkūkalani is born Hāloanakalaukapalili, the kalo plant, and Hāloa, the first ali'i. In this genealogy, Kānaka Maoli are directly descended from land and are taught to

mālama ʻāina (care for) their kūpuna and elder and younger siblings. This love is also one that stands for the political independence of the lāhui Hawaiʻi. Both a verb and a noun, aloha ʻāina is the direct action born out of Kānaka Maoli radical resurgence at the same time that Kānaka Maoli embody aloha ʻāina as the people who stand for lands, waters, and the lāhui. Dr. Trask’s activism, scholarship and poetry demonstrate aloha ʻāina in every sense of these words.

My kuleana to Hawaiʻi grows out of the ways my body is sustained and nurtured by the lands of Heʻeia Uli under the malu or shelter of the mountain Keahiakahoe, the Kanikoʻo, Lipoa, and Kālepa rains of Heʻeia, the Mololani wind, and the sea of Kawahaokamanō (The Mouth of the Shark). Settler kuleana means loving these lands and waters that sustain us without having to claim them.

In my readings of these poems, I hope to activate new discussions of the knowledge-ways Dr. Trask’s poems open up, and I have provided references to source materials for others to access so that they may share their own insights into the richness of her poetry.

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In her poetry, scholarship, and activism, Dr. Trask prepared the ground for the resurgence of Kānaka Maoli and their ancestral knowledgeways. Her proclamation, “We are not Americans! We are not Americans! We will never be American! We will live and die as Hawaiians!” rings in our ears decades after she made this speech on January 17, 1993, at ʻIolani Palace to commemorate the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom government and to call for the people to be steadfast in their stand for Hawaiian self-government.<sup>12</sup> Her words have been incorporated into hip-hop/rap music by Sudden Rush and reiterated in speeches by Kānaka Maoli leaders, artists, scholars, and teachers, many of whom were her former students, and these words remind Kānaka Maoli never to identify with the settler/occupying state. Her words continue to resonate on social media, as Kānaka Maoli confront many contemporary struggles, especially the stand to protect the sacred mountain, Mauna a Wākea, from the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope.

At this point in time, in 2023, we can revisit the present-day impacts of her scholarship, activism, and poetry. Her collection of poetry, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, translated her critical theory into a lyrical and deeply felt language of personal story. It lays a profound foundation for her work of nation-building through the Hawaiian sovereignty initiative Ka Lāhui Hawaiʻi and her fight for the protection of the Heʻeia wetlands where she lived. Her poetry reflects lessons in ancestral knowledge regarding the cultivation of more intimate relationships with the elements as well as her efforts rallying Kānaka Maoli to the work of nation-building through the public access television program *First Friday: The Unauthorized News*, which she co-founded with her life partner David Stannard and John Witeck (later, her sister, political leader and activist Mililani Trask, became a co-host with Manu Kaiama).

Dr. Trask’s poetry takes on new meaning in this era of climate change, as the education programs of the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation, Lonoa Honua, and Kamauliola are encouraging people to cultivate more intimate relationships with the akua. Kumu hula Dr. Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahale moved us beyond definitions of akua as “gods” by

teaching us that the akua are more aptly described as “elemental forms and energetics.” She writes, “Chants describe forms and patterns in the natural world, including nature’s endowment for life and destruction. These natural elements were visible, immediate, and constant for our ancestors, and the generic term accorded to these forbears is akua, or gods. These akua have specific names and designations based on their form, function, and characteristics.”<sup>13</sup> During the 2019 stand to protect Mauna Kea, Dr. Kanahale and her daughter, Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani, began to open up instruction of hula and chant to the people on the frontlines of struggle. On July 17, 2019, thousands of us sat along the access road to Mauna a Wākea with tears streaming down our faces as Dr. Kanahale and thirty-seven other kūpuna (elders) and their attendants were arrested for standing for Mauna a Wākea against law enforcement officers armed with tear gas and sound cannons.<sup>14</sup> As kūpuna, they had asked that they be arrested first to protect their pulapula (seedling descendants), and we bore witness as law enforcement officers zip-tied their wrists, pushed the kūpuna in wheelchairs, escorted them with their walkers, or carried them to the police wagons. Before then, knowledge had long been protected by hālau hula (hula schools of knowledge), but with the massive movement to protect the Mauna a Wākea, hula masters began to release some mele from kapu, to make them noa (freed) to the wider public, especially the knowledge contained in ancient mele for the purposes of more pono (informed, ethical, and balanced) land stewardship.

Dr. Kanahale and Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani have worked to teach thousands of land and water protectors to grow pilina with the four hundred thousand akua or the elemental energies and potentialities through chant and song. As Kekuhi explains, “We describe the pedagogy and epistemology of Hālau ‘Ōhi‘a and we share specific exercises from our practice that you can adapt and use in your own places. We believe these practices can inform a larger community of professionals interested in green readiness, response, and recovery because they can enhance personal, community, and global resilience through the cultivation of sacred relationships to place.”<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Trask’s activism and scholarship nourished the grounds for this flourishing aloha ‘āina movement, which can be traced back to the movement in the 1970s to protect the island of Kaho‘olawe from being bombed by the US military—and even further back in history to all stands that Kānaka Maoli have taken to protect lands and waters. Her poetry took the ancient teachings about intimate pilina with the akua and made them accessible to readers, reminding Kānaka that they had a long tradition of growing these relationships with the elements. She wrote at a time when we began to see the widespread return of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i in Hawaiian language immersion schools. In 1887, King Kalākaua was forced by foreign businessmen to sign the Bayonet Constitution, and foreign education administrators began to cut funding for Hawaiian language schools. By the time of the overthrow in 1893, they had cut all funding for any school instruction in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i.<sup>16</sup> As Katrina-Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāoekoala Nākoa Oliveira explains, Act 57 of the 1896 Laws of the Republic of Hawai‘i stated, “The English language shall be the medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools . . . Any schools that shall not conform to the provisions of this Section shall not be recognized tby the Department.”<sup>17</sup> Kūpuna share stories about how they were severely punished for speaking ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. It was not until 1986 that Hawai‘i

Revised Statutes, section 298-2, allowed funding for Hawaiian language educational projects approved by the Hawai'i Board of Education. By this time, the names of the akua had been forgotten by many people. Dr. Trask's poetry, published in 1994, reminds us that the akua are still here, and she returns to the sensual experiences of feeling the akua in their many elemental forms against her skin.

Even today, as Kānaka Maoli recover places names like He'ēia Uli, we are seeing the remembering and the restoration of the mo'olelo of these places. In the most beautiful words, Kekuhi reminds us that places surge back when they hear us call out their names: "The functionality of the name is the thing . . . Say the names of the things you want to come alive. He'ēia knows that that name is being pronounced. Places have memories whether that memory comes out as a grass or an ākulikuli or in the form of a hau bush that got overtaken. Once that thing is cleaned up, they know to come back."<sup>18</sup> This is, in a broader sense, also the "dream of return," the restoration of the land and waters, in Dr. Trask's poem "He'ēia."

What Dr. Trask describes for us in her poetry is the ability of Kānaka Maoli "to breathe the Akua." To breathe the akua is, as she writes, "to sense the ancients." Dr. Trask explains:

All gods were visible: in cloud formations, in trees, in gushing water, in the mist from the mountains, in the steam from the volcano, in the fish and mammals of the sea. Such manifestations of divinity are still known as kino lau . . . Everywhere, in traditional Hawaiian life, the sacred was visible in the mundane. Everywhere, divinity was near, to be sensed, heard, and felt. Such was our Native way of life: sentient beings in a divinely sentient world."<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Trask's poetry traces her experience of the akua in her daily life and in the political struggle for independence. The act of breathing the akua is an act of manifestation and appears as lines in the poem "To Hear the Mornings," which I quote here in its entirety:

To hear the mornings  
    Among *hāpu'u*: a purity  
Of cardinals, cunning bees  
    in shell-covered sleeves  
    of honeysuckle,  
        . . . the aqua undertones  
    of cooing doves.

To seek our scarlet  
    '*apapane*, Hōpoe restless  
    amongst the *liko*  
        and '*olapa* trees,  
    shimmering the leaves  
        . . . *shush-shush*  
    of burnt rain  
                    sweeping in from Puna.

To watch our lustrous  
volcanic dawn seducing  
‘*elepaio*, speckled beak  
sucking ‘*ōhelo* berries  
oozing sap  
under a crimson sun.

To breathe the Akua:  
*lehua* and *makani*,  
*pua* and *lā‘i*,  
*maile* and *palai*  
. . . pungent *kino lau*.

To sense the ancients,  
*ka wā mamua*—from time before  
slumbering still  
amidst the forests  
of *Kā‘ū*, within the bosom  
of *Pele*.

To honor and chant  
by the sound  
of the *pū*, our  
ageless genealogy:  
*‘āina aloha*,  
*‘āina hānau*,  
. . . this generous, native Hawai‘i.<sup>20</sup>

When the speaker “breathe[s] the Akua,” we see the ways that the elemental energies have become a part of her body, as all Kānaka Maoli are the ‘āina because they descend from the great akua Papahānaumoku and the lands she has birthed. The brilliant red ‘apapane bird that we see today greet Hōpoe, Hi‘iaka’s lover, who walks the land, restless among the *liko* and ‘*ōlapa* trees: as the ‘*ōlapa* leaves twirl and flash in the wind, the hula dancers twirl and mimic this natural movement of the elements. There is no separate mythic time: the past, present, and future are collapsed into one temporality, an “ageless genealogy.” In this moment, the akua are present, flickering among their many “pungent kino lau” (body forms), their many forms and energetics.

Dr. Trask’s critical theory of the feminist Eros is foundational to any reading of her political essays and her poetry in *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* and *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum*. In all of her works, Dr. Trask reclaimed the body of the motherland, not built on Westphalian constructions of a masculine militancy of the fatherland but through feminine sexual agency and generative energetics. Trask’s research for her dissertation was later published in 1986 as *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory*. In that text, Trask writes, “The erotic, once understood, can transform the merely sexual

into an expansive life-force, into a commitment to life which is grounded in women's experiences. The feminist Eros thus unleashes a desire—for creative expression, especially in the areas of sexuality and work; for balance among needs, particularly those of autonomy and nurturance; for sharing and interdependence without bondage.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Trask's conception of a feminist Eros builds upon a firm foundation of 'ike kupuna, or ancestral knowledge, that identifies Haumea as the divine feminine, elemental energetic who ages and returns to youth again and again as succeeding generations to have children with her grandchildren.

As a fierce scholar-activist, Dr. Trask brought together her research on the feminist Eros with an incisive analysis of the operations of settler colonialism. Uprisings and revolts against the violence of apartheid in South Africa, the emergence of the black consciousness movement, and the beating to death of Steve Biko in 1977 all led to Trask's use of the term "settler colonialism" in Hawai'i in the early 1980s. As an undergraduate student at the University of Hawai'i in 1989, I bore witness to a Black man on a hunger strike on the lawn in front of administrative offices at Bachman Hall, demanding UH divestment from apartheid in South Africa. This action awakened many of us to the similarities between settler colonialism in South Africa and settler colonialism in Hawai'i. Systemic processes of settler colonial Americanization had obscured the history of the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom government. In her lectures, Dr. Trask often cites Nigerian scholar-activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's words about the "cultural bomb" by which settlers represent Native pasts as "wastelands." Thiong'o writes, "The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland."<sup>22</sup> New generations of Kānaka Maoli scholars continue to look to Dr. Trask's scholarship for insights into the operations of US occupation, settler colonialism, and decolonization and deoccupation.

In 1994, Haunani-Kay Trask published *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, whose combination of raw, swift, and deadly poems and erotic, sensuous poems complemented her incisive criticism of settler colonialism in her essays in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, however, many of the poems decenter a history of settler colonialism, instead writing from a Kānaka Maoli worldview, one where Kānaka grow loving and passionate relationships with the natural world.

*Light in the Crevice Never Seen* is organized into three sections, "Chant of Lamentation," "Raw, Swift, and Deadly," and "Light in the Crevice Never Seen," reflecting points of emphasis derived from key lines in Dr. Trask's poetry. As Dr. Trask herself explains, however, it was her editor, Eleanor Wilner, a woman she saw as a friend, who organized the poems this way. Dr. Trask, then, approved the editorial organization of the poems, but the poems demand their own attention in relation to each other, and they overlap and exceed the limits of the titles of these sections.

The poems open with "A People Lost," a pain-filled poem illustrating the ways that Hawai'i is often unrecognizable to Kānaka Maoli today, a foundational loss of

peoples' ancestral connections to the land as a kupuna. The speaker describes how her people are

like slaves from another  
time, carelessly left  
by a Christian  
trader in some foreign land.

The greatest pain here is that Hawai'i has become a "foreign land" to the Native people of this place. That alienation from the land is a violation of millenia of intimate relationships where Kānaka Maoli engaged in the art of kilo, close intergenerational observation and forecasting of natural phenomena. Every mountain, every stream, every wind and rain had a name, many of which have been lost over time due to the settler colonial banning of Hawaiian language instruction and the remapping of the lands. Even the Native trees and plant life have changed, and today, 90 percent of dryland forests are made up of invasive species. As the speaker explains, the fragrant Native trees—native koa (acacia koa), 'iliahi (sandalwood), hala (pandanus), 'ōhi'a (a species of Myrtaceae), and 'ulu (breadfruit)—have been replaced by

strange unscented trees  
from Asia and the Middle  
East.

These invasive trees were introduced as "ornamental" plants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the umbrella or octopus tree (*schefflera actinophylla*), strawberry guava (*psidium cattleianum*), and albezia (*falcataria moluccana*), trees that suppress and outgrow Native species and drink three times as much water as Native species. It has been a settler colonial process of replacing the Native with the settler.

For the speaker, the key question that frames this collection of poetry is, "how / did this happen here?" The erasure of place names, the invasion of lands by settlers and introduced species, the criminalization of Hawaiian language, hula, and culture, have stripped Hawai'i and Kānaka Maoli, leaving them "ill-clothed," "black hair freezing in the American air," naked in an Arctic wilderness of blinding white concrete and the landscape of Americanization and white supremacy. While many continued to hold on to their mother tongue, for many others, the loss of 'ōlelo Hawai'i was a loss of an entire epistemological system and intimate relations with 'āina encoded in place names. All the speaker sees is

great gouges of Northern white,  
nothing familiar in  
the Arctic wind.

Broad swaths of concrete sidewalks, concrete buildings with glass walls jutting out of the land, concretized stream channels, the explosion of new housing subdivisions—all of this covers over what was once vast green acreages in lo'i kalo (kalo pondfields) across ecosystems of 'āuwai and fishponds.

The opening poems recount a history of death, intertwined with the settler colonial history of population collapse, from one million Kānaka Maoli in precontact times to forty thousand at the time of the overthrow in 1893, with the deaths of the larger-than-life men in Dr. Trask's life: her father, Bernard Trask, activist/mentor Noa Aluli, her cousin Ka'ōhu Cooper, and her classmate K. W. Each of these poems reflects on different ways that these men's lives teach us about the difficulties of the struggle for liberation.

The passing of Bernard Trask in 1977 signifies for the speaker of the poems the passing of an era. In "*Makua Kāne*," she tells her father,

for a month I wake  
to find you  
in the stomach of  
my sleep.

Her father, once a "young Hawaiian dancing / stories of the land," was of a generation when Kānaka went as communities to lay their fishing nets. As the structural invasion of settler colonialism encroaches upon their lives, however, we see the pollution of the land, and overdevelopment bulldozing the traditional practices of *kalai'āina* where ali'i enacted land divisions to best care for lands and waters, which are now subjected to a settler mathematics of enclosure and subdivision:

politicians  
carve up land:  
shoreline for hotels, valleys  
for houses, underground for bunkers, sewers  
miles of wire.

The speaker reflects on these changes with weariness as she confesses:

me, I fight  
for the land but  
we feel there is no hope.

Yet, despite this despair, she knows that her father has passed leadership on to her as his daughter, who now "wears your oldness / as a cloak."

Under the conditions of settler colonialism, death is cast as a choice made under duress. In "*Refusal*," dedicated to "K.W., class of '67, Kamehameha Schools," the speaker describes how her classmate, with his pregnant lover at the door, may have paused at the threshold of the doorway before being killed for a drug deal gone wrong. Here, the speaker wonders why he opened that door and the consequences of that choice, her words haunting us long after we have put the poem down. She wonders

why our men beautiful  
and strong on their running  
feet, sun in their earth-dark eyes  
why these lean, soft-lined men

go carelessly down  
to nothingness  
one after another, a whole nation  
of men, Hawaiian brothers?

These men, beautiful, strong, and full of life, these young fathers “go carelessly down to nothingness.” She responds to her question in her “Notes,” where she explains that Hawaiian men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four have the highest suicide rates in Hawai‘i. She then goes on to say, “This poem is dedicated to one of my classmates who attended an all-Hawaiian high school, the Kamehameha Schools, with me. His death, like that of so many of our young Hawaiian men, is not officially classified as a suicide. However, the number of deaths that are drug related or occur as a result of ‘accidents’ is much higher for young Hawaiian men than for men of other ethnic groups (white, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino).” The speaker asks us to consider what choices the men see available to them in the 1970s, in a world where they have been denied their political autonomy, language, and culture, a world where a refusal to participate in an American political system means that the only options are deadly ones. Ultimately, here, Dr. Trask suggests that seeing these deaths as suicides is a way to foreground that these men are active agents making a choice under the US settler conditions of genocide that would have them be American, or dead.

Against these deaths, the speaker tells us how she draws from stories of women who are “raw, swift, and deadly” to engage in “long-term strategies.” Memory will be their spear. Dr. Trask writes of the ways that her offering to the lāhui will not be sons but an epistemological shift that grows out of the memories of women, her daughters. In Dr. Trask’s widely cited poem “Sons,” the speaker tells us that she will be “slyly reproductive.” She explains that the heteropatriarchal fantasmatic vision of sons providing immortality so that one does not recede into the amnesia of history is a false illusion:

I have no sons  
to give, no line of  
immortality.  
I am slyly  
reproductive: ideas  
books, history  
politics, reproducing  
the rope of resistance  
for unborn generations.

Her birthing of books and knowledge will outlive any sons she might have birthed. Instead, she values the daughters who will continue her work:

And I,  
I stay behind  
weaving fine baskets of resilience  
to carry our daughters in.

The speaker nurtures the daughters of the lāhui who will continue her acts of sly reproduction in their birthing of knowledge—ideas, books, history, politics.

The people of the lāhui return to the body of the grandmother who is ʻāina, Papahānaumoku, through the eating of stones, and children pass on this knowledge in song. In “Kaulana Nā Pua,” the speaker describes three “dark children, strong / and gnarled” playing on the shore, “little fists raised / in a mimic of power.” A tourist stoops to ask them for directions and

a sudden hiss of blade  
slashed haphazardly upwards  
finds his bluest  
eye.

This is, perhaps, one of the most viscerally powerful moments in the collection. My students often ask, did the children stab the tourist? We can instead ask, what is the blade in this poem? What is the blade that strikes

one staggering figure  
stunned into blindness  
hearing stained voices in the ocean’s thunder.

The children’s voices raised in song are the blade that stuns the tourist into blindness, the voices that disorient him and force him to see what he cannot recognize: the children as agents of Native intelligence. As the speaker continues,

the children  
sing-song a tune out of time past  
when their tribe  
was a nation  
and their nation  
the great lava mother, Hawai‘i.

The children know their own history, and the song that the children sing is “Kaulana Nā Pua,” a patriotic song. As Dr. Trask explains in the “Notes,” the song is an anthem in the contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty movement:

Kaulana Nā Pua (literally, ‘famous are the children’) refers to the protest song written by Ellen Wright Prendergast. The song urges Hawaiians to oppose the overthrow of the Hawaiian government by U.S. marines in 1893 . . . Members of the Royal Hawaiian Band, on strike because of the overthrow, urged Mrs. Prendergast to compose the song because, they argued, ‘We will not sign the haole’s paper, but will be satisfied all that is left to us, the stones, the mystic food of our native land.’<sup>24</sup>

When we think of the children’s voices, these are the lines from “Kaulana Nā Pua” we imagine them singing:

‘Aole mākou a‘e minamina,  
I ka pu‘ukālā a ke aupuni  
Ua lawa mākou i ka pōhaku  
I ka ‘ai kamaha‘o o ka ‘āina.

We do not value  
the government’s sums of money  
We are satisfied with the stones  
Astonishing food of the land.<sup>25</sup>

The image in this poem of the children singing evokes for me the sound of Pūnana Leo Hawaiian-language immersion students chanting “I Kū Maumau” on the *Kū‘ē* compact disc by Sudden Rush, who intertwine Dr. Trask’s voice saying “We are not Americans!” with that of elementary school students chanting “I Kū Maumau,” calling for Kānaka Maoli to come together to carry the tree out of the forest to build a canoe and grow a nation.<sup>26</sup>



FIGURE 2. Light in the Crevice Never Seen, Kawahakūmanō, Kō‘olaupoko District. Photo by the author.

The poems in the last section, “Light in the Crevice Never Seen,” return to Kō‘olaupoko, the windward district of O‘ahu, the lands where Dr. Trask made her home and where the speaker of the poems finds solace, rejuvenation, revitalization. The title of the book, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, comes from the opening line of the poem “Kō‘olau,” which evokes a whole epistemological world in the short space of the poem. The poem begins:

light in the crevice  
never seen mosses  
*palai kāla‘au*  
bamboo.  
crescent moon  
stones  
fragrant clack clack  
from the shadows

hunehune rain  
aloft on the wind  
steamy rocks  
falls of crustaceans.

The title of the collection evokes images of the crevice as both volcanic and vaginal, red, hot pele (lava) coursing under black volcanic rock. The crevice in the poem is the cooled lava revitalized by the elemental energies of the Kōʻolau. The mosses, palai, and kalai are the greenery of Haumea, the deity of rebirth and regeneration. Palai is one of the important plants placed on the altar as an offering to Laka, the deity of hula.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Kanahēle explains, “Laka is the female deity whose kinolau, or body forms, are some of the majestic and fragrant forest plants that are used on the kuahu, or hula altar.”<sup>28</sup> She is also the elemental energies of evapotranspiration so important to the rainy kōʻolau (windward) side of Oʻahu.<sup>29</sup> The reference to the resonant sticks of wood called kālāʻau struck rhythmically against each other, reinforces the connection to Laka and the natural processes of the upland forests.<sup>30</sup> The language of hula appears in the poem as the “fragrant clack clack / from the shadows,” gesturing toward knowledge-ways forced underground when hula was banned from public performances by the missionaries who deemed it a “lascivious” dance.

The hula embodies the movements of the elements, and the speaker’s evocation of the fine and delicate hunehune rain “aloft on the wind” is an evocation of such movements. As kumu hula Collete Leimomi Akana and Kiele Gonzalez write, “Our kūpuna had an intimate relationship with the elements. They were keen observers of their environment, with all of its life-giving and life-taking forces. They had a nuanced understanding of the rains of their home. They knew that one place could have several different rains, and that each rain was distinguishable from another. They knew when a particular rain would fall, its color, duration, intensity, the path it would take, the sound it made on trees, the scent it carried and the effect it had on people.”<sup>31</sup> The rains of Heʻeia Uli are many, including the Kanikoʻo, the Kālepa, and the Lipoa rains. Rains are the keakea, the wai o ke kāne or the essence of Wākea, the expanse that is Sky Father, showering upon Papahānaumoku, giving life to all vegetation on earth.

We can also see the ways that Dr. Trask figures the image of the crevice to illustrate the hidden ‘ike kupuna or ancestral knowledges inscribed within the contours of a woman’s kohe, her vagina. The following lines underscore this image:

blue caves far  
away   choked  
with grasses wet   fully winged.

These caves are reminiscent of the “rose-wet caves” Adrienne Rich describes in her poem, “Wherever in this city, screens flicker,” of which Dr. Trask writes in *Eros and Power*, “in the [poem], the vulva, vagina, and clitoris are described as a ‘rose-wet cave,’ a far cry from the ‘gash,’ hole,’ and ‘wound’ of patriarchal descriptions.”<sup>32</sup> The photo on the cover of the first edition of Dr. Trask’s *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* depicts Pele’s fiery lava emerging from the black crevices of the land, and the images of the pāhoehoe

lava on the back cover resembles the folds of the vulva, echoed again in the crevices of the Ko'olau mountains rising up behind Dr. Trask as she stands in the He'eia wetlands. Vaginal images are celebrated in Kānaka Maoli oral traditions honoring the genitals and genealogical procreativity of the mō'i, the high chiefs. Dr. Trask's reference to the vaginal image "fully winged" alludes to Kapokohēlele, Kapo of the flying vagina, the deity capable of detaching her vagina and sending it soaring in the air. When Kamapua'a has tired Pele out with four days of lovemaking, Kapo sends her flying vagina to seduce Kamapua'a away from Pele.<sup>33</sup> Kapo's ability to detach her vagina signals that she is a woman who can seek out her own desires and also tuck them away by bundling her vagina in a piece of kapa cloth.<sup>34</sup> In this way, the poem also celebrates the intimate knowledge Hawaiian women have of their own bodies and their relationships with the elements.

The poem "Waimānalo Morning" celebrates this passionate love-making of the elements. Dr. Trask took her early morning swim in the turquoise waters of Waimānalo, where dispossessed, houseless Kānaka Maoli families make their homes under blue tarps. The quiet beauty of the white sand and wild, untamed surf provided a refuge for her. Here, the deepening purples and translucent reds of early dawn and the "slow-eyed moon" intensify as

Ko'olau vulva  
veined with heat  
extravagant

light plunging  
in long violet  
shafts,

penetrating  
the carnal sea  
with lightning.

Here, "Ko'olau vulva" describes the mountain range, fertilized not only by the rains of the ko'olau (windward) side of the island, but also by the kukuna o ka lā (the rays of Kānehōalani, the sun). Papakū Makawalu researcher Dr. Ku'ulei Higashi Kanahēle explains that the sun is the causative of all cloud formation. The sun heats the waters of the ocean or the land, causing evaporation, and air currents transport the water vapor to higher altitudes, where the steam condenses into water droplets or ice crystals forming clouds. We can see the comparison to the Ko'olau mountains when Dr. Ku'ulei Higashi Kanahēle testifies to the importance of mountains like Mauna a Wākea as a gatherer of water: "Hawaiians believed that Maunakea is responsible for gathering, storing and distributing the water on Hawai'i Island. As mentioned in Kauikeaouli's birth chant, the sun is the causative of cloud formation, but it is Maunakea's role to attract the clouds to our island. The Kumulipo, Hawai'i's cosmological chant, describes the ways that Maunakea's forests then act as a pahuwai (storage basins) for the water to collect and recharge the aquifer, hānau 'o waoma'ukele, he mau pahukapu."<sup>35</sup> Western scientists scoffed at ancestral knowledge by arguing that, from a geomechanical view, forests cannot

attract clouds. But they could not account for the fact that the heaviest rainfall often occurs in forests hundreds of miles inland. Instead, what they found is that Indigenous wisdom is, indeed, correct because evapotranspiration in forests creates a drop in air pressure that causes cloud vapor to rise, creating an upward air current, which in turn generates a horizontal air current, drawing in air from higher pressure areas, increasing the water vapor in the forest.<sup>36</sup> In this way, forests create a giant air current that attracts moisture from hundreds of miles away, now known as the “biotic pump.”

It is this “Ko’olau vulva” that reminds us of Pele’s travels through the island archipelago, the movement of lava that leaves behind the sharp pali, the cliffs of the mountains. Long after Pele has left O’ahu, the Ko’olau volcanic series stands, and we see the daily processes of regeneration and rebirth as the rains and the rays of sunlight penetrate the lands to fertilize the land and to renew abundance.

The poem “So Tight Is My Love” most powerfully evokes the fecundity of the ocean, the elemental form of Kanaloa, and the birthing of the stars. The poem begins, “so tight is my love / I come suddenly into the deep of my heart.” This opening line puns on the double meaning of “come,” the orgasmic pleasure of the “caverns of mud” with “female foam hanging.” The “great fish” who is circling in the water, “milky sperm dissolving,” evokes phallic references to the one-eyed fish, “hidden veins throbbing.” The result of this procreative plenitude is the “pregnant / undersea moon,” which calls to mind the waxing of the moon, Hinahānaiakamalama, as if she is growing round with child, and the waxing moon phases that charge the liquid energies in all living things. The reference to Hina as the undersea moon is meant for us to remember stories of Hina’aimalama, who is given the moon and the stars for her food. And it is she who ’aimalama (eats the moon) and causes the waning moon phases.



FIGURE 3. Hina’aimalama, Hina Who Eats the Moon. Photo by Candace Fujikane.

In Abraham Fornander's recounting of "Kaa no Hinaaimalama," Hina'aimalama, Hina Who Eats the Moon, is born of Hinalua'iko'a (Hina who brings forth coral from within) and Kūkeapua. Huihui Kanahale-Mossman explains that Hinalua'iko'a is the elemental phenomenon of coral spawning and her kāne Kūkeapua is the rising motion of the coral gametes.<sup>37</sup> The story explains that her brother Kipapalauula is exiled by their father for not being diligent enough in his guarding (kia'i) of Hina'aimalama, and he tells her, "E, ke hele nei au; eia ko ai a me ko ia la, he mahina ka ai, he hoku ka ia, hoo iho la ke kaikuahine i loko o kahi ipu, o Kipapalauula kona inoa, mamuli o ka inoa o kona kaikunane." ("I am going, so here is your food and here is your fish." The food was the moon and the fish were the stars. The sister then took these things and put them in a calabash, called Kipapalauulu, after her brother).<sup>38</sup> This is the close connectedness of Hina and Kanaloa, Hina who causes the movements of the tides spread out over kaulana mahina, the different moon phases. The speaker's final lines image the "sexual / squid squirting his ink / to the stars," recalling for us the kino lau of Kanaloa, the deep consciousness of the ocean, home to the fish that are the stars, the Milky Way in the skies mirroring Dr. Trask's reference to the oceanic

milky sperm  
dissolving  
in spurts  
of gelatine.

The squid ink, kūkaeuli, is the generative fecundity of Kanaloa, the ancestral knowledge of Pō in the depths of Kanaloa, and Trask's pen as a poet, recording Kanaloa's songs of elemental love.

The recognition that the speaker in the poem seeks is that from the akua, to be seen and recognized by the elements. In the present context of the US settler state's Department of the Interior insisting on the importance of federal recognition, Kānaka Maoli, like Native American tribes, refuse federal recognition, calling instead for an end to US occupation and the restoration of Hawaiian independence. Even in 1994, what mattered to Dr. Trask was not recognition by the settler state but recognition by the elements. In "When the Rain Comes," the speaker tells us that when the rain of He'ēia Uli comes, she goes "into the marsh," the He'ēia wetlands behind her home. She tells us,

Let her winds find  
you and the great gray  
clouds roll down around you.

She is the 'āina of the Ko'olau, the land itself, a descendant of the great grandmother Papahānaumoku. She continues in a monologue to herself,

Let the smoke fill up  
your eyes and the mist  
wet your breasts.

She then wholly abandons herself:

fling off your  
last piece of colored cloth  
that she may see  
and take you.

It is the rain who sees her, and recognizes her as her own, her descendant. The speaker powerfully rewrites the opening lines in “A People Lost,” where her people are naked and freezing in the arctic air of dispossession and settler occupation and colonialism. Here, in these final poems, the speaker chooses to throw off her clothing so that she can be recognized as a descendant by the elements. And the union is also a highly erotic one as the speaker is “taken.” Akana and Gonzalez describe the ways that rain signifies a sexual union in Kānaka Maoli oral traditions: “Mist setting onto a mountain peak might express the joy and thrill of lovemaking.”<sup>39</sup> The speaker becomes the Kōʻolau mountain fertilized by the rains falling into the contours and crevices of her body. Although rains are often depicted as the waters falling from Wākea and gendered masculine energy, the rains are often named after and embody women, and the rain gendered “she” who takes the speaker shows us the passion of women loving women.

As we move through these final poems of erotic potentiality, I want to return to the poem “Heʻeia,” which opens this essay. Upon first glance, the poem is a chant of lamentation, one of “a constant, inconsolable grief.” The speaker tenderly describes the quiet of the wetlands, how

a young rain comes  
from lost Hanalei  
that velvet-leafed rain  
out of taro fields.

Perhaps the speaker is referring to the Loku rain from Hanalei, “loku” referring to a profound pain or sorrow.<sup>40</sup> That peace is broken by the intrusive sounds of military jets stationed at the Kāneʻohe Marine Corps Base Headquarters (MCBH) across the bay, to which Heʻeia extends across the reefs famed for the māla limu, seaweed gardens. Embedded in the poem are the ubiquitous, explosive reminders of the US military, where as she writes,

every half hour  
jet booms  
smash the air.

Yet regeneration abounds as the speaker describes “a dream of return” and “two hands working / the mud around dark green *hau*,” a kino lau of Haumea, the akua of regeneration. It is the dense hau thickets blooming with yellow flowers beloved by the moʻo reptilian water deities that grow over the ancient walls of the loʻi kalo and fishponds, protecting the facing stones from the trample of cattle and ranchers who would have repurposed the stones for cattle pens.



FIGURE 4. Dr. Trask being interviewed in front of her home on the edge of the He'ēia Uli wetlands. Still from *First Friday: The Unauthorized News*, video footage, July 1, 1989 episode.

Dr. Trask foregrounded the struggle at He'ēia in a special episode on the public access television program *First Friday: The Unauthorized News*. The program was a way to grow a media outlet that would stand up to the false representations in mainstream media, recalling the ways that both Trask sisters had struggled through smear campaigns.

On July 1, 1988, Dr. Trask featured anthropologist Marion Kelly and archaeologist Earl “Buddy” Neller as guests on *First Friday*. Their discussion begins with a news clip from KGMB television station on the golf course proposed for He'ēia. Farmers argued that the land needed to be kept in farming to preserve a rural lifestyle of farming. The golf course would have exacerbated problems of water runoff, poor drainage, and cesspool overflow.

The construction of a golf course would also threaten O'ahu's largest remaining fishpond built a thousand years ago. Cook Islander anthropologist and ethnic studies professor Marion Kelly urges viewers, “We should not make such great decisions today that don't permit us to have options tomorrow. And a fishpond is a very special thing.” Kelly explained that a golf course would bring siltation and pesticides into the fishpond and into Kāne'ōhe Bay.

Dr. Trask took the conversation to an alternative way of honoring and learning from the He'ēia wetlands: “I am a graduate of the Kamehameha Schools, and I think



FIGURE 5. Anthropologist Marion Kelly, archeologist Earl “Buddy” Neller, American Studies Professor David Stannard, and Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask discussing the possibilities of restoring He‘e‘ia Fishpond. Still from *First Friday: The Unauthorized News*, video footage, July 1, 1989 episode.

they could use the marsh to educate Hawaiian children and to feed them at the same time. And instead of doing that, they would prefer to be like any for-profit corporation when in fact they are the largest charitable trust in the world.” Dr. Trask asks a key question: can the fishpond be restored to the cultivation of food? She explains:

The whole question of fishponds, people need to remember, speaking of Kāne‘ohe, Ka Hanahou Circle [Kanoluhuiwi and Waikapoki Fishponds], Mahalani Circle [Waikalua Fishpond] were fishponds. I mean, that’s why you can’t see the great innovation and creativity of Hawaiians because they fill them in and put houses on them. And then when people like Marion, or me, or Buddy, or you say, “Hey, listen, we could do something with this!” They think they are anomalies when in fact fishponds were more the norm than they were anomalies, at least for this area, for Kāne‘ohe Bay, also for Molokai.

She continues: “One of the things about the struggle to preserve fishponds is that people say to Hawaiians, ‘You’re just looking backwards,’ and ‘That’s all finished with and now we fly food in from America.’ What is the possibility of fixing that fishpond and making it functional again. Could we do that?”<sup>41</sup> Dr. Trask’s words were deeply prescient, anticipating what would be a phenomenal return of over thirty-eight fishponds of 488 total fishponds over the next four decades. A year later, on December 6, 1989, He‘e‘ia residents formed a group named Kūpa‘a He‘e‘ia to protect the wetlands.<sup>42</sup>

Because of the efforts of the communities of Ko‘olaupoko, a land exchange between the Hawai‘i Community Development Authority (HCDA) and the landowner in 1991 enabled Bishop Estate to transfer 406 acres of land in He‘e‘ia to the HCDA to preserve the wetlands.<sup>43</sup> Ten years later, in 2001, Mahina Paishon-Duarte, Lihau

Hannahs Paik, Anuenue Punua, Kanekoa Kukea Shultz, Keli'i Kotubetey, Kala Hoe, Kawai Hoe, and Hi'ilei Kawelo founded Paepae o He'eia, the nonprofit organization that cares for Hale o Meheanu fishpond, working in partnership with the landowner, Kamehameha Schools.

On July 1, 2009, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi, a community-based nonprofit organization, secured a long-term lease from the HCDA through its Māhūahua 'Ai o Hoi (He'eia Wetland Restoration Strategic Plan), with the lease effective as of January 1, 2010.<sup>44</sup> Since then, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi has worked to restore lo'i kalo and farming as well as to remove mangrove, an invasive species that chokes the waters of the He'eia Stream. The He'eia Community Development District, also identified as the He'eia wetlands, was established in 2011 by the Hawai'i State Legislature to facilitate the management of the wetlands.

Today, the restored Hale o Meheanu fishpond stands at the forefront of educational efforts to pass kilo insights and practices against climate change events down to schoolchildren and their families. Kawelo explains that Papahūlani researcher Kalei Nu'uhiwa told her that the mo'olelo of the birth of the first fishpond at Leho'ula in Hāna, Maui about fifteen hundred years ago was most likely a response to climate change, which necessitated the cultivation of fish.<sup>45</sup> Kawelo explains that the sovereignty of the land is triggered when Kānaka add their life's breath to working with the land. Using the term "ea" to refer to life, breath, and political sovereignty, Kawelo looks to the reciprocity between Kānaka and the sovereign 'āina that enables the lands and seas to flourish:

You know, I think without us as Kānaka caring for the place, learning about the place as we care for it, restoring it, working through all of those kinks, without us being here, then there is no ea. The 'āina possesses its own life and exists regardless of whether people are on it or not, but I feel like the ea of it comes through us, through our relationship with 'āina. We breathe more life into it.<sup>46</sup>

We saw this aloha 'āina in action at the "Pani ka Puka" (Fill the Hole) day of community action on December 12, 2015, as two thousand people stood in a massive line stretching out over half a mile, passing stones and buckets of rocks hand to hand to fill in the damaged part of the fishpond wall. Eight hundred years ago, the people would also have stood in such a line to halihali pōhaku and smaller hakahaka stones in 'upena olonā (olonā bark nets). A community effort enabled people who had no connection to the fishpond to develop that sense of pilina (connectedness) and kuleana (responsibility, privilege, purview) to the health of the kuapā (the stone walls).

The fishpond is now healthy, with schools of moi (threadfish), pāpio (juvenile trevally), pualu (surgeonfish), 'ama'ama (juvenile mullet), kākū (barracuda), Sāmoan crab, and mo'ala (crab). The effects of fishpond restoration have rippled outward, including the return of Native plants, seaweeds, and birds. Kawelo tells me, "The first thing that came back after we cut back the mangrove was the kīpūkai [seaside heliotrope], the ākulikuli [sea purslane], and then the mau'ū 'aki'aki [sedge] and the 'ahu'awa [sedge used for straining 'awa, which also helps to control erosion]. We saw the limu [seaweed] come back, especially the 'ele'ele, and that limu is an indicator of groundwater sufficiency."<sup>47</sup> The increase in freshwater flows into the bay have increased



**FIGURE 6.** “Pani ka Puka” (Fill the Hole) Day at Hale o Meheanu, He‘eia Fishpond. December 12, 2015. Photo by Sean Marrs.

the wai momona, the waters that are full of life, creating estuaries. The restored waters of Waiāhole and He‘eia streams bring with them the little freshwater shrimp and crabs that the he‘e (octopus) and other fish like to eat. Where fishermen had begun to think there were not any more moi in Kawahaokamanō, they began to see entire schools of moi. The healthy coral spawn during the new Hilo moon, allowing the coral-eating fish to flourish. The ‘ūlili (wandering tattler), ‘alae ‘ula (mudhens), and ae‘ō (Hawaiian stilt) birds have returned to the fishpond and have hatched their chicks. And perhaps most importantly, the fishpond has seen the education of thousands of schoolchildren and adults who have learned from knowledgeways restored at the fishpond and the possibilities of feeding ourselves in an era of climate change.

Just as Dr. Trask envisioned, the protection of the marshlands made possible the restoration of the fishpond and its abundance today. The incredible range of her poetry shows us the akua inhabiting the lands and waters and the moon who traverses all, connecting all forms of life through the moon phases of pregnant Hina, the waxing moon, who pulls at the tides and the salt waters in our bodies. I want to end with the lines from Dr. Trask’s poem, “He‘eia Uli”:

Risen from the waters  
of Waimānalo, across  
  
the eyes of Olomana,  
down the scrotum

of Kōnāhuanui,  
over the thighs  
  
of Ko'olau Poko,  
pregnant Hina  
  
arrives. In the cool  
of He'ēia Uli,  
  
bathing her breasts,  
she gleams,  
  
remembering  
Pō Mahina.

The contours of the land are the sensuous contours of the bodies of the akua. The poem ends with the Pō Mahina, the calendar of the moon phases, reminding us that there is a time for everything, for fishing, for planting, for restoration, for fighting, for making love. The pull of the moon activates us and teaches us the optimum time for all things that were generated out of the ancestral place of Pō.

Dr. Trask's poetry endures as a reminder that the akua continue to stand with Kānaka Maoli whether their names are remembered or not. Their stories about their functions are passed down in chant, song, and story, and the people return to them to say the names of the akua and their places once again. The people have never stopped honoring the akua, engaging in the art of kilo observation to strategize for the future. As Dr. Trask foresaw, Hale o Meheanu, the He'ēia Fishpond, was brought back to life, and it continues to breathe life back into Kawahaokamanō, known as Kāne'ōhe Bay. The fishpond itself has spawned new generations of kia'i, land and water protectors, many of whom are students of Dr. Trask's teachings, standing guard with the spear of memory. And behind them are the thousands of Haumea's wāhine body forms, each woman with a kukui nut in hand, the burning oils of the nut illuminating the deep ancestral knowledge of Pō to which Dr. Trask has returned.

## NOTES

1. Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Dog that Runs in the Rough Seas," in *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*, ed. Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, and Brenda Peterson (New York: Random Housing Publishing, 1999), 45.

2. Language usage: In the case of the term "Kānaka Maoli," I use the kahakō (macron) when referring to plural Kānaka Maoli or Kānaka (people) but not when using Kānaka Maoli as an adjective, as is the standard practice. Mo'olelo published in Hawaiian language nūpepa did not use diacritical marks except for the use of the occasional clarifying apostrophe for the 'okina (glottal stop).

3. Paula Möhlenkamp, Charles K. Beebe, Margaret A. McManus, Angela H. Kawelo, Keli'iahonui Kotubetey, Mirielle Lopez-Guzman, Craig E. Nelson, and Rosanna Alegado, "Kū Hou Kuapā: Cultural Restoration Improves Water Budget and Water Quality Dynamics in He'ēia Fishpond," *Sustainability* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints201809.0593.v1>

4. For a discussion of akua as elemental forms, see Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahele, *Ka Honua Ola: 'Elī'eli Kau Mai / The Living Earth: Descend, Deepen the Revelation* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2011), 5.
5. "Haumea lāua 'o Moemoea'ali'i," in *Ka Honua Ola*, 2–3.
6. Poepoe, Joseph Mokuohai, "Ka Moololo o ko Wakea ma Noho ana ma Kalihi," in "Ka Moololo Hawaii Kahiko," *Ka Na'i Aupuni*, June 8, 1906.
7. From *Light in the Crevice Never Seen: Poems by Haunani-Kay Trask* (Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books), 1994.
8. See "Ko'olaupoko Ahupua'a Boundary Markers—An Historic Event!" on the Ahupua'a Boundary Marker Project, Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club website, <https://www.koolaupoko-hcc.org/ahupuaa-boundary-marker-project/>
9. Poepoe, "Ka Moololo," June 15, 1906.
10. Poepoe, "Ka Moololo," June 15, 1906.
11. Translation mine.
12. See "Ho'okupu a Ka Lāhui Hawai'i: The Master Plan 1995," in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).
13. *Ka Honua Ola: 'Elī'eli Kau Mai / The Living Earth: Descend, Deepen the Revelation* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2011), xv.
14. The word "kupuna" is used for singular nouns and adjectives. The word "kūpuna" with the kahakō or macron denotes plural nouns.
15. Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani, Heather McMillen, Christian P. Giardina, and Kainana Francisco, "Cultivating Sacred Kinship to Strengthen Resilience," in *Green Readiness, Response, and Recovery: A Collaborative Synthesis*, ed. Linday K. Campbell, Erica Svendsen, Nancy Falxa Sonti, Sarah J. Hines, David Maddox (Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2019), 189, <https://doi.org/10.2737/NRS-GTR-P-185-paper13>.
16. Noelani Goodyear Ka'ōpua, *The Seeds We Planted: Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 21.
17. "E Ola Mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i: The Hawaiian Language Revitalization Movement" in *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty*, ed. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 80.
18. Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani, Hālau 'Ōhi'a class, October 30, 2021. Quoted with her permission.
19. Trask, "The Dog that Runs in the Rough Seas," 38.
20. "To Hear the Mornings," *Night is a Sharkskin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 40.
21. Trask, *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 94.
22. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986), 3.
23. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).
24. Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, 50.
25. Samuel H. Elbert and Noelani Mahoe, *Nā Mele o Hawai'i Nei: 101 Hawaiian Songs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1970), 63–64.
26. Sudden Rush, "I Kū Maumau," recorded 1997, track 8 on *Kū'e* (Way Out West Enterprises, compact disc).
27. Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel Elbert. *Hawaiian Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986).

28. Kanahēle, *Ka Honua Ola*, 123.
29. Pualani Kanakaʻōle Kanahēle, Papakū Makawalu Workshop, January 16, 2021, on zoom.
30. Nathaniel Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 116.
31. Collette Leimomi Akana with Kiele Gonzalez, *Hānau ka Ua: Hawaiian Rain Names* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2015), xv.
32. Trask, *Eros and Power*, 134.
33. “He Moolelo Kaa No Kamapuaa,” *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, July 15, 1891. See translation by Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa, *A Legendary Tradition of Kamapuaʻa, the Hawaiian Pig-God: He Moʻolelo Kaʻao o Kamapuaʻa* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1996), 116–17.
34. Kameʻeleihiwa, *A Legendary Tradition of Kamapuaʻa*, 114, 149.
35. Kuʻulei Kanahēle, written direct testimony, Contested Case Hearing 2, September 16, 2016, 2–3, <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/mk/files/2016/10/B.11a-Kanahēle-WDT.pdf>
36. “The Biotic Pump: How Forests Create Rain,” video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKL40aBg-7E>
37. Huihui Kanahēle Mossman for the Edith Kanakaʻōle /Foundation, “Hinaluaʻikoʻa,” Instagram, May 20, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/.CAWhAaCA389/>. Cited with permission of Kanahēle-Mossman.
38. Abraham Fornander, *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore: The Hawaiian Account of the Formation of Their Islands and Origin of Their Race, with the Traditions of Their Migrations, Etc., as Gathered from Original Sources*, facsimile edition, vol. 5. Memoirs of Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. Bilingual edition (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2004), 268–69. Translation is Fornander’s.
39. Akana, *Hānau ka Ua*, xvii.
40. *Ibid.*, 164.
41. *First Friday: The Unauthorized News*, episode on “Archaeology: Heʻeia Marsh and Kāneʻohe.” Haunani-Kay Trask, David Stannard, Marion Kelly, Earl “Buddy” Neller. July 1, 1988. Archived at the University of Hawaiʻi Libraries on Voyager.
42. “Year in Review: Golf Courses,” *Windward Sun Press*, December 28–January 3, 1990, A-1 and A-10, [https://static.dvidshub.net/media/pubs/pdf\\_20607.pdf](https://static.dvidshub.net/media/pubs/pdf_20607.pdf). See also “Proposed Heʻeia Wetland Sale Takes Heavy Flak at Kupaʻa Heʻeia Meeting,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 7, 1989, A-8.
43. Hawaiʻi Community Development Authority, “Heʻeia Community Development District Plan,” April 2021, <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hcda/files/2021/04/20210430-Draft-Heeia-CDD-Master-Plan-.pdf>
44. For this history of the Heʻeia wetlands, see the Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi website: <https://kakoowiwi.org/historyofheeia/>
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