

BETWEEN "EASTER ISLAND" AND "RAPA NUI"

The Making and the Unmaking of an Uncanny Lifeworld

By Pablo Seward

This thesis is a historically informed ethnography of the Rapanui people of Easter Island. The restoration of this dispossessed and ravaged island by outsiders into what some scholars call "Museum Island" is the historical background on which the thesis is set. I argue that this postcolonial process has produced in the Rapanui an uncanny affect when re-encountering their landscape and the emplaced persons within. I discuss the ontological, historical, and contemporary aspects of the case on the basis of ethnographic data I collected and archival research I conducted in Easter Island in the summer of 2013 and January 2014. In the first part, I use a semiotic approach to analyze how various Rapanui performance genres reveal Easter Island to be a landscape alive with emplaced other-than-human persons. In the second part, I examine the mediatization and political use of a leprosy epidemic from the 1890s to the 1960s in the island by the Chilean nation-state, focusing on how a new apparatus of power made autonomous citizens of Rapanui individual persons. Meanwhile, outsiders restored the island's archaeological sites for the development of a tourism industry, in effect reproducing the Rapanui lifeworld at the same time that the Chilean nation-state destroyed the conditions of this lifeworld as a sacred indigenous place. In the third, final part, I inquire into how Rapanui people of today unmake what is now an uncanny lifeworld by rekindling, in performance, relations with abandoned ancestors. The thesis concludes with a discussion of a collaborative project in 2014-2015 that attempts to regenerate dominated forms and modes of being in Rapa Nui.

Humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents... An island doesn't stop being deserted simply because it is inhabited. Only in appearance does [inhabitation] put an end to the island's desertedness; in reality, it takes up and prolongs the élan that produced the island as deserted... Human beings live there already, but uncommon humans, they are absolutely separate, absolute creators, in short, an Idea of humanity, a prototype... a statue from the Easter Islands... We have to get back to the movement of the imagination that makes the deserted island a prototype of the collective soul.

— Gilles Deleuze, “Desert Islands” (1953), my emphasis

XIX

... Here we are again with our false smile...
 While on **the island bare of palm trees**,
 There where stone noses stick out,
 Like triangles drawn of sky and salt,
 There in the tiny navels of the sea,
 We left behind the final purity,
 Space, the astonishing societies
 That raise their naked stone, their truth,
 So that nobody will dare love them or live with them,
 And that's my cowardice, I hereby swear:
 I feel suited only to the most temporary
 Buildings, and in this capital without walls,
 Made of light, sand, stone, and thought,
 Frightened as the rest, I saw and fled
 The clean clarity of mythology,
 The statues bathed in blue silence.

— Pablo Neruda, “La rosa separada” (1973), my emphasis



Figure 1. Painting by artist Te Pou Huke. Reproduced with permission from the author.

INTRODUCTION

A. *A Site of Symbolic Struggle*

i. Problem

“Birds of steel falling...*manutara* [birdmen], birds of steel... falling, again and again, onto this beautiful island, this beautiful people.”¹ These are the words (translated from Spanish) that Hapa, a Rapanui woman from Easter Island, used to portray a dream she had the night before I first met her. Hapa claimed this dream came from ‘*Oroŋo*—the “ceremonial village” of the Rapanui. ‘*Oroŋo* is today as replete with petroglyphs as it is with tourists, coming and going in endless batches deposited by steel birds. These airplanes have an uncanny resemblance to that traditional omen, the sooty tern, whose coming and going the ancients recorded by means of these *manutara* petroglyphs. Hapa revealed this dream to me when discussing a recent altercation she had had with a Santiago-based impostor of ancestral Rapanui medicine by the name “*Taote Atariki* [Firstborn Medic] Guerrero-Pakarati.” Guerrero-Pakarati falsely claimed Rapanui royal descent, and offered to Western apprentices of Rapanui medicine—for US\$700—a “Diploma endorsed by the Royal Family” on the basis of the *mana* [occult power] his hereditary fantasy accorded. “There was screaming, a lot of screaming,” Hapa told me. Who exactly is Guerrero and what exactly had he intruded into?

ii. Context

Located in the South Pacific Ocean at over 2,000 miles west of the Chilean coast, Easter Island is a 63-square-mile volcanic island and one of the most geographically isolated places on Earth inhabited by human beings. The Rapanui (a Polynesian people who were the first to inhabit the island around AD 1000) were able to produce what are today considered the most famous remains of Oceanic cultures.² Known as *moai*, in 2012 these gargantuan human monoliths attracted 70,000 tourists.³ This contemporary reality is rooted in a long history of violent dispossession and repression, colonialism and neocolonialism. It is this history that I will explore through the voice of Rapanui persons.

As an archetype of this history, I start with the story of the skull of Hotu Matu’a, the legendary chief of the first settlers of the island. Many Rapanui people attribute the dramatic series of changes the island underwent with the onset of tourism in the 1960s to the contemporaneous loss of the skull of Hotu Matu’a. Imbued in the sacred and potentially acrimonious *mana* [occult power] of Hotu Matu’a, the skull was kept in a cave, the exact location of which was only known to a couple guardians. In 1964, while researching in Easter Island French anthropologist Francis Mazière stole the skull and never returned to Rapa Nui. As a result, a Rapanui would tell you, the island was mercilessly transfigured into what Forrest Young describes as a “prehistoric amusement park of *moai* [stone statue] rides.”⁴

1 Hapa Tepano. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Informal conversation with Pablo Seward.

2 Patrick Kirch, *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands Before European Contact*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4-5

3 DuocUC. “Isla de Pascua, Rapa Nui: Anexo 5.” First accessed on 13 Feb. 2014.

4 Forrest Young. “Unwriting ‘Easter Island’: Listening to Rapa Nui.” (PhD. Diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa 2011), 38.

For the Rapanui, Mazière's act was not simply a crime but a transgression with independent and necessary consequences. The Rapanui today are not oblivious to the fact that mobile capitalism in the form of cultural tourism, global postcolonial politics, and a gamut of other macro factors led to the modernization of the island. Yet they are asking different questions: Why in such a way, why with such effects, why at that very moment? And the answers they give, in my experience, are usually related to some form of loss of *mana*, the occult power regimenting the timing and consequence of events that in ancestral times chiefs had full control over and which today is fully dissipated and unpredictable. The general questions of this thesis are how this world was unmade and how the Rapanui today remake it.

The consensus in the literature about Easter Island is that after first coming into contact with Europeans in 1722, the "ancient" Rapanui culture was finally lost in the 1860s.⁵ In 1862, Peruvian blackbirders (19th century slavers) abducted around 2,000 Rapanui, amounting to a third of the population at the time.⁶ The story continues that only those fifteen who did not perish as slaves returned to the island, only to compound the disaster with diseases, which decimated the population from 6,000 people in 1862 to 900 in 1868.⁷ By 1868, Catholic priests removed the last of the Rapanui from their traditional clan territories. They "bought" (at gunpoint) two plots of land on the island and re-settled the Rapanui around two churches.⁸ Thus dispossessed was Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Dutrou-Bornier to find the Rapanui that same year. Dutrou-Bornier proclaimed himself king of the island, made the island a sheep ranch, and subjected the Rapanui to a reign of terror.⁹ Such was the pain, the story ends, that in June 1871, the entire Rapanui population crowded the shores, hoping to abandon their homeland on board of a visiting vessel. 230 Rapanui remained on the island, "weeping and wailing." By the next census in 1877 only 110 Rapanui had survived. All contemporary Rapanui descend from these 110 survivors.¹⁰ The fable is that a "new," irreversible, transhistorical, modern "Rapa Nui" emerged as a product of this disaster.¹¹

iii. Conceptual Framework and Research Question

From my tone in the above passage, it should be clear that in this thesis I tell a different history. I do not contend the factual accuracy of the historical narrative above, but the tropes that undergird it. As I argue below, such tropes are part of a contemporary governmentality that is both the

5 This notion is found everywhere from the classics on Rapanui culture like Katherine Routledge's (1919) *The Mystery of Easter Island and Francis Mazière's Ethnology of Easter Island*, to more recent work like Grant McCall's (1976) "Reaction to Disaster," Steven Fischer's (2006) *Island at the End of the World*, and Edmundo Edwards' (2013) *When the Universe Was an Island*.

6 Claudio Cristino. "Colonialismo y neo-colonialismo en Rapa Nui: Una reseña histórica." In: *La Compañía explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patromonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui*. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte, 2011), 25.

7 Miki Makihara. "Bilingualism, Social Change, and the Politics of Ethnicity on Rapanui (Easter Island), Chile." (PhD. Diss. Yale University, 1999), 49.

8 Grant McCall. "Reaction To Disaster: Continuity and Change in Rapanui Social Organization." (PhD. Diss., Australian National University, 1976), 106.

9 Miki Makihara. "Bilingualism, Social Change, and the Politics of Ethnicity on Rapanui (Easter Island), Chile." (PhD. Diss. Yale University, 1999), 55.

10 Steven Fischer. *Island at the End of the World: The Turbulent History of Easter Island*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 112-114, 121.

11 Grant McCall. *Las Fundaciones de Rapanui*. (Easter Island, Chile: Museo Provincial R.P. Sebastian Englert, 1986), 7.

cause and the result of the island’s contemporary form as what Grant McCall terms “Museum Island,” a frozen, monologic version of its past.¹² The history I tell rests on another trope, that of the uncanny. My main contention is that the reconstructed ancient lifeworld in Easter Island has today produced what for the Rapanui is an *uncanny* lifeworld.

In 1919, Sigmund Freud wrote a famous essay in which he argues that the “uncanny” (*unheimlich*, i.e. “unhomely”) is a distinct category of human affect, designating moments in which we are led “back to something long known to us, once very familiar.”¹³ As I will show in more detail below, the contemporary form of Easter Island starting in the 1950s involved the re-erection of *moai*, all of which had been toppled by Rapanui amid internecine warfare during the 17th to early 19th centuries. The island today appears unchanged from three centuries ago, but for the Rapanui, I contend, the island is in reality an alien return, like its original but ineffably different. The island is thus “in between,” liminal, ontologically insecure, contested.

Another foundational concept of this thesis is that of culture as a process rather than as an entity. A way to supersede the notion of culture as an entity is the concept of “lifeworld.” Following Edmund Husserl, I define “lifeworld” as the pre-reflexive, intersubjective understanding of reality as a “coherent universe of existing objects” shared by a people.¹⁴ A lifeworld is empirically a spatiotemporal linguistic order, that is, a way of rendering a shared world with discursive references to space and time. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this a “chronotope,” which produces culture and is historically produced by culture.^{15,16} As such, a lifeworld is the result of the multiple, contradictory, improvising process that is culture.¹⁷

Writing about the reconstruction of Lebanon and the consequent loss of tradition, Lebanese writer and artist Jalal Toufic provides us with a new way of thinking the experience whereby outsiders destroy one’s homeland and then re-animate it. He introduces the concept of a “surpassing disaster,” which is characterized by the “immaterial withdrawal” of tradition, by which he means that what has been lost of one’s tradition is its vital quality, rather than anything quantifiable.¹⁸ When one’s ravaged and dispossessed homeland is re-configured or re-produced by outsiders something like the uncanny ensues: a return of something homely in an un-homely form. In this thesis, I will first explore what a homely landscape entails for the Rapanui; how this landscape was ravaged, restored, and made uncanny; and finally how the landscape becomes a home again. More specifically, my research questions are: What exactly is the lifeworld that broke in the 1860s, how did this lifeworld become uncanny to the Rapanui in the 20th century, and how do Rapanui people today re-articulate their ancient lifeworld as ordinary, familiar?

“Easter Island” and “Rapa Nui” are today more and more labels for the island that connote topological attributes that situate the actual place in different systems of meaning. As Forrest Young points out, today there is “a binary opposition between ‘Chilean things’ (*me’e Tīre*) and ‘Rapanui things’ (*me’e Rapa Nui*).”¹⁹ “Easter Island” is a globally mediatized place, an

12 Grant McCall. “The End of the World At the End of the Earth: Retrospective Eschatology on Rapanui (Easter Island).” First accessed in 20 Jan. 2014. <<http://anthroendsoworlds.wordpress.com>>

13 Sigmund Freud. “The Uncanny.” Trans. Starchey, Alix. In: *Imago* (1919), 1-2.

14 Edmund Husserl. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology; An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970 [1936]), 108.

15 Michael Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986 [1937]).

16 Brad Weiss. *The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World: Consumption, Commoditization, and Everyday Practice*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 5-7.

17 Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam. *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 1.

18 Jalal Toufic. *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*. (Los Angeles: Redcat, 2009), 11-12.

19 Forrest Young. “Unwriting ‘Easter Island’: Listening to Rapa Nui.” (PhD. Diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa 2011), 21.

archaeological relic. “Easter Island” has a capital (Hana Roa), an airport, and fifteen thousand “archaeological sites.”²⁰ In high season, at any one time, the odds are that there are more tourists than natives.²¹ “Rapa Nui,” conversely, is the place the Rapanui know.²² Archived in the William Mulloy Library of Easter Island I found a list of approximately 500 place-names documented by Grant McCall’s main informant, Leon Tuki, in 1972. Each place-name attests to one or more stories tied to each place. Thus, unlike “Easter Island,” every stone in “Rapa Nui” is testament to the being-in-the-world of an ancestor, as shown by the following map:



Figure 2. Map based on a larger and more detailed map on Rapanui toponyms by Te Pou Huke. Reproduced by Arthur 2012: 13.

The uncanny results from these two imaginaries of the island (“Easter Island” and “Rapa Nui”) that destabilize each other. One is the image of the island as Museum Island—a patrimony to humanity, a curatorial arrangement that must not be changed in any way. The other is the image of the island as Rapa Nui—a memoryscape dialogically engaging with a past that is therefore constantly in the making. In this thesis I explore the ways in which one of these images (Easter Island as Museum Island) came to regiment the contemporary form of the island and how the other image (Rapa Nui as an indigenous lifeworld) is returning to reclaim its original ontological primacy over the island.

iv. Post-Contact History

In 1895, the late Dutrou-Bornier’s functioning sheep-ranching enterprise was taken over by Chilean businessman Enrique Merlet, who created “The Exploitation Company of Easter Island.” Merlet bought the entire island from Dutrou-Bornier’s partner, except for two small plots belonging to the sovereign Chilean nation-state.²³ The island thus effectively became what

20 Alphonso Lingis. *Dangerous Emotions*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 3.

21 DuocUC. “Isla de Pascua, Rapa Nui: Anexo 5.” First accessed on 13 Feb. 2014.

22 Forrest Young. “Unwriting ‘Easter Island’: Listening to Rapa Nui.” (PhD. Diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa 2011), 57.

23 Claudio Cristino. “Colonialismo y neo-colonialismo en Rapa Nui: Una reseña histórica.” In: *La Compania*

Douglas Porteous calls a “company state,” a historical formation where a company takes the role of a government.²⁴ Merlet’s first instruction to his foreman Alberto Sánchez Manterola was to build a “magnificent stone wall three meters high.” Manterola, in turn, ordered fifty of the total 214 disenfranchised Rapanui at the time to build such an enclosure, “for cattle.” The enclosure of 1000 hectares, little did the Rapanui know, was in reality meant for them.²⁵

The history that follows is one marked by the presence of leprosy, a topic I relegate to Chapter 2. In brief, the Chilean nation-state abandoned the Rapanui to the whims of the Company and the perversions of Navy officials until 1964, when the Rapanui were finally granted Chilean citizenship. Most of what today is Haha Roa was essentially a concentration camp until then. Rapanui people could only exit the 1000-hectare enclosure with a special permit, lest they be shot dead, and had to do so accompanied by a Company official.²⁶ Haha Roa, where 87% of Rapanui still live today, is emically known as *he hare ma’auri* [the house of iron].²⁷

The official story is that starting the 1950s the landscape was simply restored and the Rapanui simply underwent a radical, if positive change of lifestyle. I contend that “restoration,” however, is not the correct term for what William Mulloy and other archaeologists accomplished from the 1960s to the 1990s. As Ingold and Hallam argue, “copying or imitation... is not the simple, mechanical process of replication that it is often taken to be.”²⁸ Some of the sites were restored such that they intentionally appear like ruins. The restoration process usually involved re-assembling a muddled cultural landscape, rather than simply restoring *in situ* landscape features. Outsiders had ransacked many of the sites multiple times, so archaeologists had to fill the gaps with material from other sites and even with material that was in the personal possession of Rapanui people.²⁹ For instance, in the case of Ahu Tonjariki, a tidal wave had displaced the site, which lay cluttered at the time of restoration. Moreover, in the case of Ahu Tahai, the smallest of the *moai* did not ancestrally belong to that platform, and the ramps in front of the *moai* were completely reconstructed by Mulloy.³⁰



Figure 3 . Image showing how the island was prior to restoration.

explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patromonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011), 39.

24 Douglas Porteous. *The Modernization of Easter Island*. (Victoria, B.C.: Dept. of Geography, University of Victoria), 1981.

25 Claudio Cristino. “Colonialismo y neo-colonialismo en Rapa Nui: Una reseña histórica.” In: *La Compania explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patromonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes* (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011), 39.

26 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 107.

27 Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Chile. “Censo 2002: Síntesis de Resultados.” (Santiago: Empresa Periodística La Nación S.A., 2003).

28 Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam. *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 5.

29 Bradley Stabler. “A Conspiracy of Cartographers: Notions of Self-Fashioning Applied to Geography.” In: *Rapa Nui Journal* 23, no. 2, 2009, 128.

30 Alexandra Edwards. Easter Island, Chile, 2014. Personal communication.



Figure 4. Image showing the process of restoration.



Figure 5. Image showing a restored site today.

Other than technically an inaccurate term for what actually took place, “restoration” forgets the fact that in the 1860s, before the Rapanui were first decimated and dispossessed of their land, Rapa Nui may well have been an incipient new lifeworld. The havoc Europeans witnessed, including the toppled *moai*, may have been the ruins of a past lifeworld amid latent efforts to create a new lifeworld. Both Rodrigo Paoa³¹ and Te Pou Huke,³² considered by the contemporary Rapanui community cultural leaders, talked of the *moai* as one stage in their culture’s history that had met its natural denouement; their culture, they contend, was in the full process of rebirth around the new foundational symbol of the *manutara* [birdman] when Westerns decimated their population. By “restoring” the island back to its *moai* stage, archaeologists and other outsiders assumed that Rapanui culture was stagnant.

31 Rodrigo Paoa. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

32 Te Pou Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

William Mulloy is buried beside one of the most emblematic *moai* platforms on the island. A commemorative plaque reads, "By restoring the past of his beloved island he also changed its future." Indeed, when Mataveru airport was built in 1967 and tourists began to stream in, the island was transformed. From 444 annual visitors in 1967 to around 30,000 in 2000, in 2012 70,000 tourists visited the island.^{33,34} In 1965 the population on the island was of 1,000 people, 95% indigenous, while in 2012, of the 6,000 people that lived on the island, only 50% were indigenous.³⁵ What followed 69 years of home confinement was thus a recognition as citizens coupled with an increasing dependence on the emerging global "identity industry."³⁶

v. Methodological Framework

In inquiring about hope as object of analysis, anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki notes an incongruity between the "temporal direction of analysis" and that of its "object."³⁷ How to write of something emergent using the retrospective mode of understanding common to Western epistemology? Miyazaki's answer is, to put it in my own words, to write hopefully. Another anthropologist, Jeanne Favret-Saada, notes a similar dynamic in her work: the language of witchcraft is not "interchangeable" with the "scholarly terminology" used by ethnographers to understand it. Her solution, in turn, is not to return to the moment of being caught (possessed) in order to become "uncaught" and rationalize the process of possession, but to find a "second catching."³⁸ In this thesis I confront a similar problem. If I take the task of the anthropologist to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar, how to approach the uncanny, where the object of study is the always already strange-that-was-once-familiar? How to write hopefully? How to come back to a "second catching"? How to write uncannily?

I take ethnography to be "a polyphonic dialogue of texts, spoken in voices other than my own," and therefore inherently uncanny: both part of myself as author but not part of myself (only) as ethnographer.³⁹ My duty is to bring together multiple voices (voices of contemporary Rapanui, voices of Rapanui in the past, voices of commentators) and put them into conversation with one another. Over the course of two field seasons (May-July 2013 and January 2014) I was able to conduct a total of 47 interviews in Spanish (which practically all Rapanui speak), as well as research in the archives of the local museum (to hear the voice of the Rapanui in the past). My task is thus like the task of the bricoleur: to create by drawing from already existing material and combining it in a novel way. My task is to put this material into conversation with itself and then attentively wait until this material, in a web of associations otherwise strange, becomes familiar as each link emerges into consciousness as a chain.

33 Douglas Porteous. *The Modernization of Easter Island*. (Victoria, B.C.: Dept. of Geography, University of Victoria, 1981), 254.

34 DuocUC. "Isla de Pascua, Rapa Nui: Anexo 5." First accessed on 13 Feb. 2014.

35 Jacinta Arthur. "Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations." (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 173.

36 John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnicity Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 24.

37 Hirokazu Miyazaki. *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 130.

38 Jean Favret-Saada. *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13-14

39 Stefania Pandolfo. *Impasse of the Angels: Scenes From a Moroccan Space of Memory*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 4.

vi. Theoretical Framework

I now proceed to outline the theoretical framework I use to understand the making of the uncanny in Rapa Nui as a psycho-political process. I first present Franz Fanon's concept of psychopolitics and then propose a revised version of the concept.

For Fanon (1952), as summarized below by Stefania Pandolfo,

The raced/colonized subject [is] constituted by the violent intrusion of the other, the colonizer, in the psychic space of the self, an intrusion that evacuates the self, and replaces it with the poisonous object of the other's fantasy.⁴⁰

A strong case may certainly be made for this classic Fanonian "psychodynamics of intrusion" among the Rapanui under colonization, if by this scholars mean the self-valuation of the colonized self through the tainted eyes of the other. I could write about, for example, how many of my older informants remember their parents prohibiting them from speaking Rapanui, or how "the mothers offer their daughters to have a grandson of race, which they naively judge as superior," to use the words of a Navy official in the 1950s.^{41,42} But, in the context of the present, I move beyond Fanon. On the one hand, it is problematic to employ the framework provided by Fanon on a people removed from myself by both history and culture. Whether the observations above correspond to actual desires on part of the Rapanui people under colonization cannot be ascertained. On the other hand, being Rapanui today is a matter of pride, not of shame. Many Rapanui nowadays go through months of bureaucracy to change their names from Spanish to Rapanui.⁴³ Another good index of this change is the popular *Tapati* festival. *Tapati* started out as the February spring fest demanded by the Chilean government of all municipalities. Up until the 1990s, Rapanui people would dress as Superman and other celebrities associated with the West for the event. Conversely, nowadays the festival is a space of ancestral sport competitions and multiple forms of folklore.^{44,45}

This change from the colonized self as a repulsive to the colonized self as an attractive imago seems to correspond to a new form of psychopolitics. Elizabeth Povinelli concisely remarks on what makes this new psychopolitics different:

This is what fundamentally distinguishes the operation of power in colonial and (post) colonial... societies... Hegemonic domination in the latter formation works primarily by inspiring in the indigenous subject a desire to identify with a lost indeterminable object—indeed, to be the melancholic subject of tradition.⁴⁶

40 Stefania Pandolfo. "Clad in Mourning: Violence, Subjugation and the Struggle of the Soul." Paper presented at the 2011 Conference of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, April 1, 2011, Santa Monica, CA (2011), 27.

41 Valentín Riroroko. Easter Island, Chile, 2014. Recorded interview.

42 Carlos Vicuña Fuentes. *En las prisiones políticas de Chile: cuatro evasions novelescas*. Santiago de Chile: Cruz del Sur, 1947: 143-144

43 Leo Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

44 Miki Makihara. "Being Rapa Nui, Speaking Spanish: Children's Voices on Easter Island." In *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 2 (2005), 7.

45 Leo Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

46 Elizabeth Povinelli. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2002), 39.

The fundamental difference with which this thesis is concerned, then, is that the colonized is not inferior to the colonizer, nor even to the colonizer's image of him or herself, but inferior to an allegedly lost image of him or herself which existed before the process of colonization was complete. This theoretical development is empirically consistent with a double-bind commoditized ethnicities like Rapanui face today, namely, that "the more successful any ethnic population is in commodifying their difference, the faster it will debase whatever made it different to begin with."⁴⁷

Following Angela García's seminal work on addiction, I term this psychopolitics a "psychopolitics of melancholy," where melancholy refers to a pathological form of mourning, "mourning without end."⁴⁸ In her study of heroin addicts in New Mexico, García finds that the logic of melancholic narratives she encounters is regimented by the biomedical discourse of "chronicity," and by the ideology, institutions, and practices produced by this discourse.⁴⁹ Similarly, what I see in Rapa Nui is a discourse of melancholy: an impossible indigeneity in the past with which the Rapanui must eternally identify but which will never again form part of themselves.

In restoring their landscape to a prior stage and freezing it under the imaginary of Museum Island, archaeologists and other outsiders assumed that any form of "development" thereof was to strictly mean "economic development" that accrued from the commodification of their culture as a relic of the past. In fact, all of the major sites on the island are today part of the national park system and as such are legally closed to Rapanui people for all purposes except touring. Rapanui are not asked to stop being Rapanui; they are asked to continue being Rapanui, but are not allowed to practice being Rapanui by an ideology, institutions, and practices associated with cultural tourism.

vii. Steel Birds

I started this thesis with Hapa's dream about "birds of steel," which she equated with *manutara* [birdman] petroglyphs. The petroglyphs are similar in form to airplanes, so I interpreted her dream as a metaphor for exogenous agents intruding into her island under the guise of her own cultural forms. Later I learned that Manutara was the name of the first airplane to have landed on the island before the airport was built, in what is considered a feat of aviation. The plane made it to the island in 1951, whereupon the Chilean president remotely proclaimed:

Compatriots: The plane 'Manu-Tara' that... arrived to your coast, like the bird of luck of your legends, announces better times to you... This voyage heralds the initiation of a line that, in the near future, will bring your island and the continent together... thus complementing the spiritual connection between us.⁵⁰

The oration was read out loud to the Rapanui. The plane was received with chants and dances. Some three days after the arrival of the plane "copious rain fell and the joy was immense";

47 John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnicity Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19.

48 Angela Garcia. "The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, and the Melancholic Subject." In: *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (2008), 722.

49 Ibid., 722-3, 726

50 "Anuncio de mejores tiempos en mensaje a los pascuences." *La Nación* [Santiago], 19 January 1951.

rain had not fallen for six months.⁵¹ But at the time of the plane's departure back to Chile, there was strong wind and a wave hit the bottom of the plane, irreparably damaging the floaters—"the bird damaged by bad luck" a journalist wrote of the event.⁵² The bird inauspiciously left. Many more birds were to come and are still coming.

I. CHAPTER 1: THE FAMILIAR "Rapa Nui": A Dividual Lifeworld and a Relational Epistemology

In this chapter, I set the grounds for what is considered familiar in "traditional" Rapanui society. In line with new formulations of the "traditional," in no way do I insinuate that such a lifeworld is distant in space and time to modernity, or "allochronic."^{53,54} Rather, my use of "traditional" refers to the ways in which this lifeworld is opposed to the image of the island as Museum Island, which is a modern image. I argue that what are generally considered "animistic beliefs," which "primitives" and children supposedly hold, are better understood as a relational epistemology.⁵⁵ This relational epistemology, in turn, refers to a dividual lifeworld. This chapter lays the grounds for Chapter 2, where I explore the process by which this dividual lifeworld was repressed out of the Rapanui and re-made. In Chapter 3, I explore how this broken ontology has today found a new logic in its fragments.

The concepts of a relational epistemology and of dividuality are foundational to my argument in this chapter. Following Marilyn Strathern, I define dividual societies as those that construct the person as divisible, multiple, transformative, fractal, socially embedded, and sociocentric.⁵⁶ Anthropologists have formulated dividual personhood mainly as a result of the study of Oceanic cultures, specifically of the Polynesian concept of genealogy. As put by Alfred Gell, in Polynesia,

Any individual person is 'multiple' in the sense of being the precipitate of a multitude of genealogical relationships, each of which instantiated in his/her person; and conversely, an aggregate of persons, such as a lineage or tribe, is 'one person' in consequence of being one genealogy.⁵⁷

The distinction between dividual and individual has proven problematic; by now it is a platitude to say that all societies have individual and dividual constructs of the person.⁵⁸ For the

51 "El Manu-Tara trajo esperada lluvia, dicen los pascuencos." *La Nación* [Santiago], 22 January 1951.

52 "Los restos del Manu-Tara, el pájaro herido por mala suerte..." *Vea* [Santiago], 7 November 1951.

53 Works as early as Bendix (1967), followed by more recent works like Comaroff and Comaroff (1992: 6), Clifford (1988: 5-6), Chakrabarty (2000: 13), and Palmié (2002: 15) have all shown that "tradition" should not be treated in teleological terms.

54 Johannes Fabian. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

55 Nurit Bird-David. "Animism Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology." In *Current Anthropology* 40, no. S1 (1999).

56 Marilyn Strathern. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems With Women and Problems With Society in Melanesia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

57 Alfred Gell. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 140.

58 Such an argument has been made by scholars such as Geertz (1973), Englund and Leach (2000), Smith (2012), and Lambek (2013).

sake of my argument I therefore take dividuality as a Weberian ideal type, that is, an analytic that resists conceptual infallibility.

On the other hand, I use relational epistemology to refer to the theory of knowledge underlying a dividual lifeworld. This theory is predicated on “developing skills of being in the world with others” rather than on “*introject[ing]* representations of things in the world.”⁵⁹ A dividual lifeworld is, then, one in which the intersubjective understanding of reality is not (only) predicated on rational dialogue between self-contained agents representing the world in ever changing ways, but on embodied interactions between porous characters themselves contained in a dynamic monadic cosmos. As Ingold points out, “we are dealing here not with a way of believing *about* the world but with a condition of being *in* it.”⁶⁰ A beautiful manifestation of this relational epistemology can be seen in the exegesis of *rongorongo*, the wooden-tablet script for which Rapa Nui culture is so famous. As explained to me by Petero Huke,

Only two persons can read *rongorongo*. You cannot read it by itself; or you can, but it loses its meaning. That is why *rongorongo* is even more complex than Arabic script, which is simply reversed. We sit in front of each other with the tablet in the middle. The first line faces me and the other line faces him. A person can read it alone by flipping the tablet, but there is no value then.⁶¹

Following Michael Lambek’s scheme, in this chapter I explore the ways in which traditional Rapanui society gives rise to a dividual lifeworld through a relational epistemology in “three media or registers”: “narratives,” “performances and practices,” and “physical remains.”⁶² What these three media have in common is a view of the past in which memory and history, if by the former we understand the “practical subjectification of the past” and by the latter, “its discursive and disciplinary objectification,” are “not discrete and fully distinguished.”⁶³ For the first media, I expand from an *aʻamu* [tale], and through it explore different categories of the person. For the second, I focus on the practice of *takona*, today an ambiguous word that refers to both tattooing and body painting. Finally for the third, I focus on the ontology of petroglyphs.

A. *Aʻamu and Concepts of the Person*

A child grows with his father in a certain sector of the island, *Puku Ake*, and they always make offerings to a female *varua* [“spirit”], *Uka Uho Heru*, and her daughter. The father is called *Pua Nui* and the child *Pua Iti*. They arrive to the coast fishing; they leave the fish in a *puku* [rocky area]. These *varua* show themselves there, a woman and her daughter, who grows up in the same way the child does. When they are already adults, the child *Pua Iti* tells *Pua Nui* “I want that girl for me,” referring to the *varua*’s

59 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 72.

60 Tim Ingold. “Rethinking the Animate, Re-Animating Thought.” In: *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 71, no. 1 (2006), 10.

61 Huke, Petero. *Easter Island, Chile*, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

62 Michael Lambek. “The Continuous and Discontinuous Person: Two Dimensions of Ethical Life.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 19, no. 4 (2013), 203.

63 Michael Lambek. “Memory in a Maussian Universe.” In: *Regimes of Memory. Radstone, Susannah and Hodgkin, Katharine* (eds.) (London: Routledge Studies in Memory and Narrative, 2003), 208.

daughter. The father tells him that the girl is a *varua*. But *Pua Iti* is in love: “so many offering, so much fish, so much sacrifice.” So the father goes and tells *Uka Uko Heru* to give her daughter, *Uke Ohu Patu*, to his son. So she gives *Pua Iti* the daughter and they go to live to *Papa Mahina*, in another sector of the island. And there they conceive *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane*. Once they are living there, *Uke Ohu Patu* always goes to get wood for the fire, while *Pua Iti* harvests. To appease his jealousy, for the woman being *varua* was beautiful, he demands her to paint her face each time she goes. That way if the *kie’a* [earth paint] is stained or runny, that means that she has sweated, that there has been contact. One day she goes to retrieve wood and suddenly rain falls. When she returns home *Pua Iti* sees it and hits *Uka Ohu Patu*. At that moment a rainbow appears; the climate changes. That rainbow is *Uka Uho Heru* who comes to rescue her daughter and returns her to her place in *Puku Ake*. There, *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* is born. After the intervention *Pua Iti* dies and *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* goes to live with his uncle, *Ataraja*, a well-known fisherman who lives in *Haja Piko*. So *Ataraja* begins to teach him how to fish, all of the process, of studying birds, tides, stars, in what minute you have to fish. One day *Ataraja* tells him “it is your turn.” So *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* makes his own boat and goes out to fish in it with *Ataraja* in another boat by his, but he cannot fish a thing. So *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* comes back to his house in *Haja Piko* and he sleeps. He dreams that he goes into an *ana* [cave], there in *Haja Piko*. He dreams that he sees a string tied to the *ana*’s edges. In the center of the string is tied a *mangai* that is the *kuhane* [“soul”] of a fisherman from that sector. The fisherman enters his dream, maybe it is *Pua Nui*, and tells him about the *mangai* and gives it to him. The next day *Ataraja* sees him fish from the shore. He sees that he is fishing tuna after tuna and that when he does the water shines. . . that is called *puna*, which is why that place is called *Puna*. That is how *Ataraja* discovers that *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* has the fishhook, and he hits him and kills him. Lightning falls and the tide swells, because he is son of *varua*. *Ataraja* runs away because he realizes that he has committed a mistake. A *nua* [old woman] sees *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane*. She knows it because in those days when something like that happened people scream, and in a chain the news gets to other people. *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* starts transforming into a pumpkin, so this *nua* takes him and ties him down for him not to leave and turns on the fire inside her house, then tells her daughter not to open the pumpkin. She goes to get wood, but her daughter is curious, so she opens the pumpkin and the smoke allows *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* to transform into human. He runs to the volcano and starts to pick bananas and the owner sees him eating his bananas, so he traps him and ties him and tells him he will eat him. *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* tells him, “How will you kill *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* who can plant this entire volcano for you?” He then keeps on transforming into different things: into a fishhook, and many other things.⁶⁴

In this section I elucidate Rapanui conceptions of personhood in relation to the *a’amu* transcribed above. *A’amu* [tales] follow a logic by which it is more correct to say that the story elicits the storyteller, rather than vice versa. *A’amu* make ancestors present not through the imagination, but through the voice, which is thought to belong not to the storyteller, but to the story itself, or more precisely to the ancestors that the story brings to being.

Michael Lambek distinguishes two aspects of dividual persons. First, the mode by which dividual persons are made is by “locating the person in an external form, like a name, ox, mask, or

64 Te Pou Huke. Sacramento, California, 2014. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

feature of the landscape.” Second and conversely, “non-material” qualities of the person “circulate through new bodies.”⁶⁵ Dividual persons are made by both experiencing interior agency through exterior form and interior form through exterior agency. We see both of these aspects of dividual personhood in Huke’s narrative above. Consistent with the first aspect, for instance, *Uke Uho Heru* appears as a rainbow at one point of narrative. This is not an isolated occurrence. I was told that other *varua* [“spirits”], such as *Pae Pae Atari Vera*, *U’a Mata Vara Vara*, and *Hiva Kara Rere*, also take non-human forms: a hut, rain, and a bird, respectively.⁶⁶ Consistent with the second aspect we saw that the *kuhane* [soul] of a fisherman was embodied by the fishhook that gave *Ure Haka Kuhane Hane* the power to become a prolific fisherman. In general dividual persons, like *varua*, can transform into and out of a human form, a process signified by the word *kuhane hane*. However, this does not mean that they are *not* human; rather it means that they are not *only* human.

How to approach this ontology of the person with Western concepts? As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro explains, “the indigenous words we translate as ‘spirit’ generally corresponds to a fundamentally heteroclitic and heterogenic ‘category,’ which admits a number of subdivisions and internal contrasts.”⁶⁷ Therefore we need a new conceptual toolkit, one that challenges our Cartesian assumptions. Empirically, I have found Maurice Leenhardt’s study of the Kanak of New Caledonia and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s study of the Yanomami of the Amazon most useful for the development of such a toolkit. Leenhardt argues that for the Kanak the living universe is made of a substance, *kamo*, which permeates humans and other entities alike. The concept of *kamo* is based on a relational epistemology. At the center of all Kanak relationships there is an empty space that can be supported by any person (human and non-human) at any one time, so long as another person has recognized that person as *kamo*.⁶⁸ What for the Kanak is the *kamo*, for the Yanomami is, roughly, the *utupë*, “vital principle ... of the animals and other beings of the forest ... composed of Yanomami with animal names, that transformed into the animals of today.” The *utupë*, like the *kamo*, is an empty space that is perceivable only insofar as it is embodied by certain entities, which for the Yanomami are the *xapiripë*.⁶⁹

I am using Kanak and Yanomami concepts of the person to foreground my discussion of Rapanui concepts of the person not because of an alleged shared ontology that all indigenous people have, but because of a similar theory of language that to my knowledge most indigenous people seem to share. I liken this theory to Walter Benjamin’s “language of things.”⁷⁰ For Benjamin, “the affective force of things precedes a linguistic order.”⁷¹ There is no distance between being and language, given that language is the direct result of being. Myth, the origin of language, involves a mimetic faculty that over time imprints the world on the mind. Language, according

65 Michael Lambek. “The Continuous and Discontinuous Person: Two Dimensions of Ethical Life.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 19, no. 4 (2013), 846-7.

66 Pakarati, Cristián Moreno. *Easter Island*, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

67 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. “The Crystal Forrest: Notes on the Ontology of Amazonian Spirits.” In *Inner Asia* 9 (2007), 19.

68 Maurice Lennhardt. *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1947], 24-26, 153-155.

69 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. “The Crystal Forrest: Notes on the Ontology of Amazonian Spirits.” In *Inner Asia* 9 (2007), 15.

70 Walter Benjamin. “On The Language of Man and On Language As Such.” In: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Volume 1 (1913-1926). Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (eds.) Cambridge [M.A.]: Harvard University Press, 1996.

71 Kathrin Busch. “The Language of Things and the Magic of Language On Walter Benjamin’s Concept of Latent Potency.” O’Neill, Mary (trans). *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics*, 2006. < <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0107/busch/en>>

to Benjamin, speaks to material agents in the world, not to brains and minds. As a result of this concept of language, the efficacy that most indigenous people grant to speech goes beyond the notion that “the spoken word *causes* a response.” For the Rapanui, Arthur tells us, a speech act “*generates* something, independently of the context or the presence and will of an interlocutor.”⁷² Language and its efficacy and failures has a direct effect on being. Consistent with this theory of language, a motif in Te Pou Huke’s narrative above is that the recognition of a person as *varua* is not obvious because *varua* have the power to name themselves. This generative theory of language is best illustrated by the following thought experiment:

When you speak, whom do you speak to? You think that it is only your interlocutor?
No, it is also to space-time! Not only do I speak for my interlocutor to listen to me;
I speak to time as well. And where is time? In the invisible and visible, in the *tupuna*
[ancestors].⁷³

Varua, given their capacity for *kuhane hane* [transformation], may appear in one of many forms or even in two forms at once.⁷⁴ Naming thus marks the moment of catching what is essentially fluid and multiple into a temporally actual state. As informant Mihaera Paté puts it,

Varua can call themselves one way here, but in the other clan they can name themselves otherwise too. They can be here in a certain form, there in another form, and over *there* in many forms. *Kuha* and *Rati* are similar to *Kava Aro* and *Kava Tu’a* from another clan, or maybe they are the same, you never know.⁷⁵

Once this concept of language is understood, the implication, as Viveiros de Castro points out, is that:

Between the reflexive “I” of culture...and the impersonal “it” of nature...there is a position missing, the “you,” or the other taken as other subject...He/she who responds to a “you” spoken by a non-human accepts the condition of being its “second person,” and when assuming in his/her turn the position of “I” does so already as a non-human.⁷⁶

Language, in its capacity to directly affect the material world, is therefore dangerous and should be treated as such. When discussing dividual persons, for example, elder Sorobabel Fati told me that he could not name some of them. This was also the case with Pau Hereveri, who asked to write two of the names down rather than utter them [*Unu* and *Horai*]; and with Tojariki Tuki, who asked me to turn off the voice recorder. When Rapanui people encounter an entity in their lifeworld they do not objectify it, but define it processually, in the becoming of an intersubjective relationship with that entity. As put by the late Santiago Pakarati,

You are walking in the countryside when suddenly you sense this thing watching you.
Even though you see a rock, you know it’s not just a rock. You perceive the presence of

72 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 35.

73 Joel Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

74 Cristián Moreno Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

75 Mihaera Pate. Easter Island, Chile, 2012. Filmed interview by Jacinta Arthur.

76 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. “Supernature: Under The Gaze of the Other.” In: *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* (2012). <<http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/masterclass/article/view/109/137>>

the *varua*. You become numb and you don’t feel the wind or the heat, or sense anything at all, nothing.... Sometimes that’s it, but other times you dream and learn who they are...When you wake up you offer them food...as a sign of friendship. The next time you pass by there again you talk to them. Sometimes you become friends and he/she protects you...Other times you know it’s bad because nothing works out...Then you steer away from the place where you saw the *varua* and warn kin not to pass by there.⁷⁷

Pakarati also brings forth the important notion of emplacement, with which I close this section. Each place of the island, indeed, bears a name that ties it to a story of an emplaced person, as evident in the following narrative:

This place is called *Te Pu Na’a Ku Peņa*. An ancestor of mine used to always come from *Puna Pau* to fish, and once he returned from the ocean he would always store his net (*ku peņa*) in a cave here. The net had *mana* so he would always fish more than other people. That is why this place is called this way.⁷⁸

Whereas *varua* and various other-than-human persons are essentially fluid, therefore, certain places and paths limit the trajectory of this fluidity. William Hanks makes a similar point in regard to Maya spirits. He argues that “they may move habitually...yet remain anchored” to their places.⁷⁹ One of these paths in Rapa Nui is *Ara Roa Ra Kei*. Before the 1860s this was the only road used to safely cross the island without transgressing the territory of other clans.⁸⁰ The following is a photograph of a typical emplaced person.



Figure 6. Emplaced person in Te Pou Huke’s garden. Photo taken by Pablo Seward in January, 2014.

These emplaced persons in the register of which *a’amu* are told usually follow the lived paths of people in the past.⁸¹ According to Te Pou Huke, every time a story is told it occurs again. These stories are best appreciated by trekking to the top of the tallest hill on the island (*Terevaka*),

77 Santiago Pakarati. In Edwards: 130

78 Riro Riroroko. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Interview recorded by Pablo Seward.

79 William Hanks. *Referential Practice, Language, and Lived Space Among the Maya*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 389.

80 Te Pou Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Personal communication.

81 Berta Hey. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview.

for the panoramic view from the hill allows the people involved in the story-telling ritual to trace the paths of the beings in the story. Some of these paths certain Rapanui may avoid if a *varua* of an *a'amu* known to transit that path belong to another clan and are therefore likely unfriendly.

As a way to end this section, I leave the reader with the following table I concocted to summarize the different Rapanui categories of the person. Though in this thesis I refrain from typology, the table illustrates the complexity of the Rapanui dividual lifeworld. However, the table is by no means exhaustive.

Figure 7		
Person category	Person properties	Person name(s)
<i>Inner, non-corporeal soul</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>May exit the body (generally through dreams) and take different forms, but these forms are always contingent on the living person's status and home-place.</i> - <i>Also exist in the form of spirits that persist after death.</i> - <i>Source of ideas, emotions, concepts, and images (Wolff 1972).</i> - <i>Each person has one.</i> - <i>Immortal.</i> 	<i>Kuhane / Wairua</i>
<i>Protective spirits/ Family guardians</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Inhabit specific places in the land of the living, be it a stone, a stream, or even the entire territory of a clan."</i> - <i>Can change appearance, often embodying animals and meteorological phenomena, and most often embodying humans with exaggerated characteristics.</i> - <i>"Watch over the members of a particular family," including their possessions.</i> - <i>"Several for each kinship group," "well over a hundred" in total (Edwards 2013: 126).</i> - <i>Mortal.</i> - <i>Spirits of distant ancestors, "omnipresent and invisible." (Edwards 2013: 129).</i> - <i>Protect the soul from possession by evil spirits and during the soul's voyage to the Po (world of spirits).</i> 	<i>Varua / Akuaku / Tupuna</i>
<i>Spirits of nature</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Same for the first four properties.</i> - <i>Includes minor deities and evil spirits.</i> - <i>Immortal</i> - <i>Inhabit the island before the arrival of humans or, in a few cases, are "generated over time as people explored... the island."</i> - <i>Existence limited to "how they express themselves; they have no other form."</i> - <i>Their abode is known as pepe (seat), which "often is a dominant landscape feature within a territory of a clan," though they can also take the form of such evanescent phenomena as the crow of a rooster or the scent of a flower (Edwards 2013: 130).</i> - <i>Not worshipped, and often responsible for annoying pranks.</i> 	<i>Varua / Akuaku / Tatane</i>

Family gods and minor deities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define clan-identity and legitimize higher status of certain clans (associated with more important gods) - Immortal. - Inhabit the world of Po or Ao, below and above the world of the living, respectively (Edwards 2013: 241). 	Po Atua / Atua Hiva
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B. Takona and a Personalized Landscape

Takona, from *-ta* [to impress] and *-kona* [place or surface of the body], is essentially the mapping of landscape on the body. The idea of *takona* was introduced to the Rapanui people by two *varua*, *Vi'e Moko* and *Vi'e Kena*, who were tattooed themselves. These *varua* were the first to tattoo human people: their two mortal sons.⁸² Through practices like *takona* landscape is personalized, as much as persons are emplaced. Tattooing in Polynesia (which is seen as a twin practice of *takona*) may be “a way of modifying the body, and, via the body, reconstructing personhood according to the requirements of the social milieu.”⁸³ That is, tattooing may allow people to embody different kinds of persons according to the dynamics of social situations. Gell further argues that the skin, as the boundary of self and other, serves, in a Freudian sense, to return to “the original unity of the fusional body.” By this he means the body before it was severed from its surroundings in the traumatic separation of child and mother with the consequent creation of the ego.⁸⁴ The word for land in Rapanui is *henua*, which is also the word for “uterus.” In many ways, then, *takona* allows the body to become part, once again, of the land and of all the individual persons that are part of the land.

Since the 1970s *takona* has been recast as a performance art, though its roots as everyday practice are ancient. Every February, during the so-called *Tapati* festival, several *takona* performances are delivered to an audience of hundreds, one of which I transcribe below:

Beginning at the top, on my forehead, *Papa Tatakū Marama* [The Petroglyph that Counts the Lunar Cycles]. Located over there [points], at *Ana Marama* [The Cave of the Lunar Cycle]. On my eyes, *ti* [endemic plant] leaves...that go down through my nose [she carries her hands over her painted face]. To their root, with which the *nua hine* [old women] prepare *umu* [food on earth ovens] for us... On my cheeks, the moon that is at *Papa Mahina* [The Petroglyph of the Moon], and the sun that is at *Puku Tau Ra'a* [The Rock From Which the Sun Hangs]. From the center of my back to my neck, *ko ura uraŋa te mahina* [the moon's gleam]... On my abdomen is my nostalgia for my mother, for my father. On my thighs, right thigh, left thigh [she passes her hand over them] the rugs on the cave's soil. Going downwards to my calf and ankle [bends down], all the clans that swim for the *manutara's* egg...On my back [turns around] *koro paina 'ariki* [the throne of the king] that goes from *Kere Mea*, through *Koro Rupa*, to get to *Ahu Kopeka Ta'e Ati*...Going downwards, in spiral, on my buttocks, the currents that our ancestors navigated. To end, on my forearm and my hand, are the ropes to climb the cliff. Thank you.⁸⁵

82 Petero Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

83 Alfred Gell. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 3.

84 Ibid., 8, 25.

85 “Takona Neru,” created by Te Pou Huke and performed by Maëha Leon in Tapati Rapa Nui, February 2013.

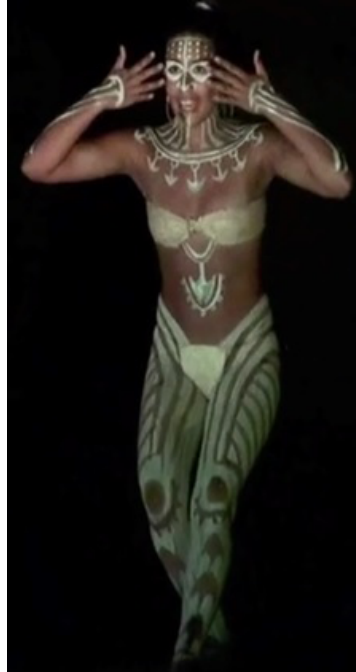


Figure 8. *Takona* performance photographed by Jacinta Arthur in Rapa Nui, February 2013.

According to Christopher Tilley, “space has no substantial essence in itself, but only has a relational significance, created through relations between peoples and places.”⁸⁶ One way of interpreting this general claim about the mutual constitution of human beings and space (as we know it) is linguistic. A referential practice known as *deixis* encodes space into “linguistic elements which specify the identity or placement...of...objects relative to...participants in a verbal interaction.”⁸⁷ In the *Takona Neru* performance above, the referents are various parts of the body, like “my cheeks,” which stand in dynamic co-presence with the object of reference, in this case “the moon” at *Papa Mahina*. The reference itself exists in the relation between the performer’s body and the panoramic landscape that is known to be around the performer, not in either object individually. The “focal object” or “referent,” in other words, is the landscape and the “indexical ground” or “indexical context” is the performer’s body in the context of performance.⁸⁸ The situated body of the performer can thus be considered an agglomeration of indexical signs, if by index we mean “a sign which refers to the Object it denotes”—in the case of *takona*, the landscape—“by virtue of being really affected by that Object” through a process of “repeated correlations.”⁸⁹ Indeed, in the performance above we see the performer glide her hands over the paintings on her body as she speaks the place the painting refers to. She then mimics the place through evanescent forms in the imaginary gestural space around her body.

Filmed and translated by Jacinta Arthur.

86 Christopher Tilley. *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments*. (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 11.

87 William Hanks. *Referential Practice, Language, and Lived Space Among the Maya*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 5.

88 *Ibid.*, 33-38.

89 Charles Sanders Peirce. “Logic As Semiotic: The Theory of Signs.” In: *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Buchler, Justus (ed.) (New York: Dover Publications, 2011 [1897]), 102.

All the above said, the body in the case of a *takona* performer is as much an icon as it is an indexical ground. Charles Sanders Peirce, on whose theories I am building my discussion here, allows for this by talking about “indexical icons.”⁹⁰ The body as object of reference in many ways *is* the landscape. –*Kona* in *takona*, in fact, is used both to denote a specific part of the body and to denote a specific place on the landscape. The first human settler of the island was Hotu Matu’a, who arrived to the island with the aid of eight *akuaku*. Once Hotu Matu’a arrived to the island, these eight *akuaku* settled in specific features of the landscape. They then began to procreate and continue to procreate, creating an entire parallel world of beings that the Rapanui constantly interact with as they make places.⁹¹ Some places are considered *kona tapu* [taboo places] precisely because emplaced in them are beings that may be vengeful against the self.⁹² The body paintings of *takona* are traditionally made with *kie’a* [earth paint], and, if properly made, the drawings of a specific place of the island on the body are made with *kie’a* extracted from that place.^{93,94} The stroke of the *maori* [master] who impresses designs on the performer’s body perpetuates the agency of persons emplaced in the *kie’a* of a place. The performer then re-enacts this perpetuation by the repetition of the movement of impression.

Other scholars have noted similar dynamics in different places and traditions. Angie Heo writes about an icon of the Virgin Mary in Egypt that exudes holy oil. The icon’s origin is in a miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary to a Coptic woman in 2009. After the apparition the woman’s hand began to exude holy oil, but ceased once this “miracle-image” was “displaced” onto the Virgin Mary’s icon. In both Coptic sacramentality and *takona* we see the object of reference “made perceptible” through iconic images, images that directly reflect the object of reference.⁹⁵

Regardless of whether *takona* is an indexical or an iconic practice, it reveals how for the Rapanui the landscape consists of emplaced persons that may be mobilized through performance. The relational epistemology that constitutes this lifeworld (at least as seen through *takona*) is perhaps best encapsulated by the term “embodiment,” the process by which people “literally incorporate biologically, the social and material world in which we live.”⁹⁶ Walter Benjamin talks about a “once powerful compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically,” which according to Stuart McLean is realized precisely through “dance, rituals, music,” and other embodied practices like *takona*.^{97,98} In short, landscape through *takona* is mimetically embodied in performance. This mimetic embodiment happens through the agency of emplaced persons as they are summoned by speech. When the performer mentions places in the *takona* performance it is not simply the case that perlocutionary effects take the audience, through the bodily milieu, to distant places on the island. Rather, these distant places, as the abode of other-than-human persons, are relationally brought to being by the spoken agency of these persons. In *takona*, then, we see the performer *making* the dividual world.

90 Ibid.

91 Petero Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

92 Piru Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

93 Ana María Arredondo. *Rapa Nui: Takona Tatu*. (Santiago: Rapanui Press, 2004), 65.

94 Leonardo Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

95 Angie Heo. “The Divine Touchability of Dreams.” In: *Sensational Religion*. Salley M. Promey (ed.) (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014), 150, 152.

96 Nancy Krieger. “A Glossary for Social Epidemiology.” In: *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 55, no. 10 (2001), 672.

97 Walter Benjamin. “On the Mimetic Faculty,” in *Selected Writings 1926-1934*. Rodney Livingstone (trans.) Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (eds.) Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999 [1933], 720.

98 Stuart McLean. “Céide Fields: Natural Histories of a Buried Landscape.” In: *Landscape, Memory, and History: Anthropological Perspectives*. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern (eds.) (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 60.

C. *Petroglyphs and the Re-enactment of Emplaced Persons*

In this final, brief section I explore the ways in which the Rapanui engage with their landscape as a dynamic place, populated by emplaced mobile dividual persons, other than through performance. Jacinta Arthur, a UCLA ethnographer I met on the island, has done a magnificent work of preserving petroglyphs through lithography. She provided me with a video of her work in which Piru Huke, a collaborator for my study as well, is shown hanging a textile over a petroglyph. Piru pins the textile on the *papa* [petroglyph] with stones at each corner. She then pounds the *papa* with a stone tool containing ink and the petroglyph's outline slowly emerges over the textile. She then says,

Can you see the image? Sometimes it [the petroglyph] doesn't want to appear [on the textile]... Sometimes it doesn't want to, even if you want it, it doesn't!⁹⁹

Whereas Arthur was tempted to attribute the spontaneous failure of the process to “lighting or angle issues,” Piru talks or sings to the *tupuna* [ancestors] emplaced in the *papa*, trying to convince them to show themselves.¹⁰⁰ Often Piru finds no other remedy than to return to the site another day. On the basis of this experience, Arthur makes a convincing argument that the “*papa* [are]... not symbol[s]... nor do [they] represent the *atua* [deity]. Rather, the petroglyph evokes the memory [of the deity] and enables intersubjectivity.”¹⁰¹ Communicating with the beings *around* petroglyphs does not involve introjecting their presence as it is plastered on the petroglyph; it involves, rather, developing the skills of being in the world with them. This, as shown by Piru's narrative above, is by no means guaranteed. Like Bird-David, by arguing for a relational epistemology, Arthur considers animacy “not a property of the *papa* itself,” but of its positioning within a relational field.¹⁰² More generally, Ingold points out that “it appears” may be grammatically correct, but not so philosophically. Things do not just appear, but are made to appear by a movement that opens the world to a subject. Therefore it is philosophically sounder to talk about the appearance of a thing's appearance. If the appearance of a thing does not appear as a subject opens the world, then one must wait or attend, rather than push or intend. In other words, when it comes to perceiving the environment, submission leads and mastery follows.¹⁰³

Povinelli inquires into this relationality that humans can develop with rocks by taking seriously the question of whether or not rocks can listen. Piru's interpretation of spontaneous failures of lithographic preservation follows the logic that “everyone... monitors bodies, objects, and the environment for changes... that might portend critical meaning.”¹⁰⁴ Povinelli points out that questioning whether or not rocks listen always “turn[s] to a matter of belief,” “to issues of value and evaluation,” “rather than method[s] for ascertaining truth.”¹⁰⁵ Instead of assessing whether these practices are “sufficiently traditional” to merit rights, the task is to unpack the

99 Piru Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2012. Video recorded by Jacinta Arthur.

100 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 65.

101 Ibid., 61-62.

102 Ibid., 64-65.

103 Tim Ingold. “Anthropology and the Education of Attention.” UC Berkeley Distinguished Lecture in Anthropology. September 22, 2014.

104 Elizabeth Povinelli. “Do Rocks Listen? The Cultural Politics of Apprehending Australian Aboriginal Labor.” In: *American Anthropologist* 97, no. 3 (1995), 509.

105 Ibid., 505-6.

“material and social relations of state domination” that frame these practices along an axis of value (evaluation) rather than truth (re-cognition).¹⁰⁶ In the following chapter my task is to draw a genealogy that accounts for the contemporary view of the Rapanui’s landscape as disenchanting, and the Rapanui’s person as an indigenous citizen with specific rights and duties, rather than as a dividual person. How was the dividual lifeworld of the Rapanui made uncanny, re-animated in its own image but without its animate character?

II. CHAPTER 2: THE STRANGE “Easter Island”: The Making of the Uncanny

Leprosy among the Rapanui is known as *revahiva*, “Chilean flag.” It arrived either in the same ship that brought the Chilean colonizing agent in 1888 or in a ship he organized in 1889.¹⁰⁷ The carrier of leprosy on the colonizing Chilean vessel was in all likelihood an infected Rapanui child, Tepano Baru-Baru, “who was brought hidden” by his parents, returnees from the massive exodus organized by missionaries in 1871.^{108,109,110} His mother’s, Vero Tanjata’s, house was a common meeting place for elders to share ancient lore. Consequently, the disease spread among Rapanui elders before the child’s early death.¹¹¹ Leprosy was finally declared eradicated from Easter Island in 1964, when only a remaining 0.7% of the population was infected.^{112,113} 1964 is also the year of the Rapanui rebellion that resulted in Chile granting them citizenship and associated benefits. Is this a coincidence or does it reveal a historical affinity that can enable a better understanding of the Rapanui’s colonial history?

In this chapter I outline the process by which the Rapanui were confined and therefore prohibited from engaging with their personalized landscape (and the emplaced persons therein). In so doing, I employ what I like to think of as a double, etic-and-emic genealogy, in Michel Foucault’s sense. Though Company officials confined the Rapanui in Haja Roa in 1892 before leprosy became endemic, I argue that the figure of the leper came to embody, both in the imagination of Rapanui people and in pertinent historical documentation, the rise of a new practice of government over the Rapanui. This new “governmentality,” or “conduct of conduct,” involved what Foucault calls biopower, through which the Rapanui were individualized and therefore separated from their dividual lifeworld.¹¹⁴ A key point of my argument is the term *figure*. Most of the Rapanui were never literally lepers; but the way of governing those Rapanui

106 Ibid., 515.

107 Rolf Foerster. “Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)” <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 162.

108 Raul Marín. *Pascua: La Isla Lejana y Misteriosa*. (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1945), 109.

109 Sebastián Englert. *Primer Siglo Cristiano de la Isla de Pascua, 1864-1964*. (Villarrica: Imprimatur, 1964), 78.

110 Julio Flores. *Te Pito O Te Henua*. (Santiago: Editorial Orbe, 1965), 126.

111 Alberto Hotus, in Stambuk, 175.

112 Ricardo Cruz-Coke. “Ecología humana de la Isla de Pascua.” In: *Revista Médica de Chile* 91, no.10 (1963).

113 Francisca Santana; Rodrigo Retamal; and Miguel Fuentes. “Modos de vida y condiciones de salud en Rapa Nui durante el período de la Compañía Explotadora.” In: *La Compañía explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patrimonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui*. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011), 208.

114 Jonathan Xavier Inda (ed.) *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 1.

who were became a model for governing the entire population. As Alberto Hotus, a Rapanui man who was one of the first nurses at the leprosarium put it, “technically, we were all lepers.”¹¹⁵

A. *A Selective Disease Against the Rapanui Lifeworld*

Leprosy was initially seen as a curse affecting Rapanui people specifically. At its outset, leprosy was probably equated with *kino*, a dermatological disease traditionally associated with ancestral *tapu* transgressions.¹¹⁶ Several Rapanui people today, for instance, still remember how two lepers—Matías and Gabriel Hereveri—contracted the disease after stealing ancient artifacts from a cave (Maitake Te Moa) that did not belong to their clan: “the spirits chased them and all their family began to fall in leprosy.”¹¹⁷ Shirley Lindenbaum’s classic study of *kuru*, a prion disease affecting Fore people in Papua New Guinea, offers one way to understand the dynamics of leprosy. She argues that diseases that follow a predictable trajectory, “since [their] simultaneous and widespread incidence place [them] beyond willed, selective malevolence,” are classified as “non-sorcery-caused.” On the other hand, diseases that in their trajectory “settle upon certain individuals rather than others” are classified as “sorcery-caused,” as is the case with *kuru*.¹¹⁸ Adam Ashforth writes about a similar phenomenon: how the AIDS epidemic in Africa has become “an epidemic of witchcraft... [for] it singles out particular victims.”¹¹⁹ In the case of leprosy in Easter Island, these victims of selective sorcery were the Rapanui in general, and the most traditional of Rapanui families in particular.

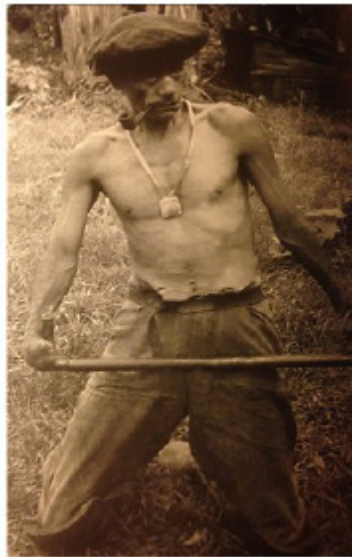


Figure 9. Gabriel Hereveri, leper, in 195. Reproduced in Stambuk 2010: 175.

115 Alberto Hotus, in *moe Varua Rapa Nui*, December 2011, pg. 10-12.

116 Valentina Fajreldin and Monica Weisner. “Mi Remedio Pascuense: Cultural Médico-Política en Rapanui.” Paper delivered in the Chilean Congress of Anthropology, November 2001, 6.

117 Tuki, Manuel in Stambuk, 240.

118 Shirley Lindenbaum. *Kuru Sorcery: Disease and Danger in the New Guinea Highlands*. (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1979), 56.

119 Adam Ashforth. “An Epidemic of Witchcraft? The Implication of AIDS for the Post-Apartheid State.” In: *African Studies* 61, no. 1 (2002), 122, 129.

The notion that diseases respect social boundaries, often used to naturalize inequality, was indeed hardly unimaginable to the Rapanui when it came to leprosy.¹²⁰ For instance, Papa Kiko, a late Rapanui leader, once stated that:

The medics said that the lepers here were different than those of the rest of Polynesia, because there they infected the entire population and even the medics died and the priests, but in Easter Island people are not infected, the disease goes only by family.¹²¹

Alberto Hotus, a Rapanui nurse active against the leprosy epidemic, similarly states that "those who got sick [of leprosy] on the island were all Rapanui; whites never got infected."¹²² Raúl Marín in 1945 explains this notion by the fact that tuberculosis (similar in constitution to leprosy) existed in Chile at the time and therefore Chileans had immunity.¹²³ However, the notion of "families punished by leprosy" remains a strongly held view by the community today.^{124,125} More generally, as Fajredlin and Weisner remark, "there is a discourse of oppositions today in the island: health equals past / disease equals present."¹²⁶ People today are sick, whereas people yesterday were never sick. People today do not respect themselves or their land. Leprosy denotes the moment of corruption of the Rapanui lifeworld.

B. *A Political Tool*

The first openly public description of lepers in Easter Island was by Father Rafael Edwards, one of the most politically influential figures in contemporaneous Chilean politics. Edwards visited the island in 1916 and wrote an account whose motif was the immoral sub-humanity under which the Company kept lepers:

Two low and dark ranches, in which you may find thirteen... ambulatory cadavers... heaped over each other... Groping I entered a cloud of mosquitoes... They have nothing to eat; with their rotten hands they must unearth from the stony ground a few sweet potatoes.¹²⁷

By claiming the power to decide who is human or not, the technical-scientific apparatus that the Chilean nation-state would gradually proceed to institute around Hana Roa on the basis of statements like these was able to transfigure Rapanui relations with their personalized

120 Charles Briggs. "Communicability, Racial Discourse, and Disease." In: *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005), 272.

121 Papa Kiko, in Stambuk, 263.

122 Alberto Hotus, in Stambuk, 192.

123 Raúl Marín. *Pascua: La Isla Lejana y Misteriosa*. (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1945), 114.

124 "Estudio Bio-Social en la Isla de Pascua." In: *Revista Geográfica de Chile* 2, no. 2 (1949), 26.

125 Rolf Foerster. "Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)" <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 177.

126 Valentina Fajredlin and Monica Weisner. "Mi Remedio Pascuense: Cultural Médico-Política en Rapanui." Paper delivered in the Fourth Chilean Congress of Anthropology, November 2001, 10-11.

127 Rafael Edwards. *La Isla de Pascua: Consideraciones Expuestas Acerca de Ella Por Mons. Rafael Edwards, Obispo y Vicario Castrense, Que La Visitó En Julio de 1916 y Junio 1917*. (Santiago [Chile]: Imprenta de San José, 1918), 22-23.

landscape. The Chilean nation-state used the figure of the leper to confine the entire Rapanui population in the name of public health; but also, it used leprosy's treatment and eventual cure to create a relation of redemption and dependence with the Rapanui people. With the expert knowledge of diagnosis, Chilean officials were able to control which individuals were sent to the leprosarium and which not. Diagnosis, indeed, was a haphazard matter at the time. In 1949, for instance, a journalist wrote:

It does not matter that the medics declare an Easter Islander healthy after a thorough exam. Being Easter Islanders the bureaucracy condemns them. On the other hand, if a Chilean lives 20 years on the island, as has happened, they may calmly return to the mainland, even without a medical exam.¹²⁸

Perhaps the most common narrative I found in all of my interviews on the topic is that people would be sent to the leprosarium as punishment, and only once in the leprosarium would become lepers. Dalia Hotus, for instance, claims that her mother was sent to the leprosarium, but that her wounds “came from cutting and sewing clothes.”¹²⁹ Papa Kiko likewise states that his older sister, Serafina, was sent to the leprosarium “because they thought of her as bawd, but that was a lie.”¹³⁰ Pau Hereveri, in turn, reveals that one night people who did not like his father got him drunk and took him to the leprosarium, “where he truly became sick.”¹³¹ Alfonso Rapu states that his brother Rafael once fell from a horse and “twisted his hand”: “They took note of him and wanted to take him to the leprosarium, but my mother massaged him so much that she normalized his bones and he was saved.”¹³² Narratives similar to these are endless. It is documented that some Rapanui who bore the standard Polynesian birthmark were wrongly catalogued as lepers.¹³³ Moreover, when Rafael Edwards visited the leper house, even he claimed that “some of them undoubtedly [had] no traces of the disease.”¹³⁴

The degree to which the Rapanui remember leprosy as a political tool becomes clear with the statement, held by some of my collaborators, that leprosy never existed on the island but rather was an invention by the Chilean nation-state. A Navy officer in 1931, for instance, noted that a Rapanui man (Lupertino) was convinced that leprosy was “an invention of the continent.”¹³⁵ Most of my collaborators, though, held a softer version of this theory: that what is generally considered “leprosy” (a contagious disease caused by a bacillus) was in fact a disease purposefully introduced and strategically controlled by the Chilean government. Sorobabel Fati remembers, for instance, when his father told him not to take a pill he was given after having been checked for “leprosy.”¹³⁶ This belief is portrayed in more detail in the following narratives:

128 Victor Bianchi. “Isla-Cárcel,” *Vea* 9 February 1949.

129 moe Varua 55. September 2012, pg. 10.

130 Papa Kiko in Stambuk, 179

131 Pau Hereveri in Ximena Torres Cautivo. “Papiano Tuki de Isla de Pascua: El Último Leproso.” *El Mercurio* [Santiago] 13 of September, 2002: pg. 28.

132 Alfonso Rapu in Stambuk, 185

133 Alvaro Tejada. “La lepra en la Isla de Pascua.” Professional paper presented to opt for a degree as Commander surgeon. Santiago, Chile, 1944, 11.

134 Rafael Edwards. *La Isla de Pascua: Consideraciones Expuestas Acerca de Ella Por Mons. Rafael Edwards, Obispo y Vicario Castrense, Que La Visitó En Julio de 1916 y Junio 1917*. (Santiago [Chile]: Imprenta de San José, 1918), 24.

135 Daniel Camus. *Revista de la Marina* 76, no. 442 (June 1931), pg. 344.

136 Sorobabel Fati. Easter Island, Chile, 2014. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

The doctor puts an injection to you, especially to those who they do not like, and blood starts coming out... that is what any doctor who came to the island did. They put an injection and the person swells. The person swells, turns red and transforms. After that they would send the person to the leprosarium and the person would get sicker.¹³⁷

Once a year all the families had to come to the hospital and there they would inject poison into them. Leprosy did not exist; it really did not. They would inject horse poison. There was never leprosy on the island. Because also there was no medic on the island to say that there was leprosy. Chile did not have a medic that was an expert on leprosy. Here Hansen’s bacillus did not exist; what did exist was the sequel of Hansen’s bacillus.¹³⁸

As Adam Ashforth has shown about local imaginaries of AIDS in Africa, however, a person who believes that witchcraft rather than HIV causes AIDS does not necessarily deny that there is such a thing as HIV. The argument is rather that “while the bacillus might be contracted from a man’s illegitimate love affairs, the witchcraft responsible for his infection could have been sent to him by his wife, his mother-in-law, or a jealous neighbour or a person . . .”¹³⁹ Similarly, the existence of leprosy may not be denied in all cases, but it is always coupled with Chile’s presence—one could not have happened without the other.

There is a broad literature about the use of disease as a tool for imperialist expansion in the Tropics, in particular leprosy.¹⁴⁰ Leprosy in Hawaii, for instance, was a means by which to implement “imperial policies through the categorization, management, and containment of Hawaiians.” Hawaiians saw leprosy as a token of the colonial politics of erasure and refused to comply with isolation policies. The consequent spread of the disease allowed American colonizers to justify their “intervention in Hawaiian domestic arrangements and community organization.”¹⁴¹

I will now proceed to draw a genealogy of the use of leprosy as a political tool in Easter Island. Given leprosy’s average incubation period of four to eight years, it was not until 1898 that leprosy was detected in Easter Island. In 1900, the commander of the yearly Navy ship reported that there were three lepers, but no “isolation measures” in place.¹⁴² In 1901, the same company foreman who had recently confined the entire Rapanui population, first isolated lepers—five or six of them, in a cave.¹⁴³ The first proper isolation occurred some years later in a hut in Tano Heu, close to the famous *moai* of Tahai, and then some 3 km from Hanga Roa in 1906

137 Noemi Pakarati in Gutiérrez and Fuentes, 268-69.

138 Pamela Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

139 Adam Ashforth. “An Epidemic of Witchcraft? The Implication of AIDS for the Post-Apartheid State.” In: *African Studies* 61, no. 1 (2002), 132.

140 For a general review of the use of disease as a tool for imperialist expansion see Crosby (2004). For works on leprosy in particular, see Gussow (1989), Gould (1995), and Edmond (2009).

141 Michelle Moran. *Colonizing Leprosy: Imperialism and the Politics of Public Health in the United States*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 47.

142 Rolf Foerster. “Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)” <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 164.

143 Ximena Torres Cautivo. “Papiano Tuki de Isla de Pascua: El Último Leproso.” *El Mercurio* [Santiago] 13 of September, 2002: pg. 25.

in another hut.^{144,145} According to Raúl Marín, however, these first efforts to isolate lepers were unsuccessful, as “lepers were disseminated throughout the entire island, living with the rest of the population.”¹⁴⁶ Alberto Hotus told me that this first “isolation” was mainly due to the fact that lepers were ashamed of their appearance, rather than to public health concerns, and therefore did not carry the sense of colonial domination it later would.¹⁴⁷

Foucault argues that atavistic institutions originally used to isolate lepers from the 12th to the 15th centuries in Europe became an “empty space,” where an “ambiguous practice” emerged in the 18th century.¹⁴⁸ The lepers disappeared, but the meaning and structure of their exclusion remained as techniques and spaces associated with general confinement. In the case of Easter Island, however, it would be strictly untrue to say that the leper colony became a model for the entire island, for the confinement of the Rapanui in Haña Roa preceded the confinement of lepers on the island leprosarium. Yet, as Rolf Foerster argues, the leprosarium was in essence “a jail within a jail,” and in many ways is still today remembered as a generalized model for how Chile colonized the Rapanui.¹⁴⁹

The Chilean government seemed not to have had much concern about leprosy until 1911, when it sent a scientific delegation to the island. The delegation declared that, “leprosy constitute[d] a grave problem for visiting ships and for Chilean territory.”¹⁵⁰ Over the next decades, leprosy was to be framed more and more as an emergency, but the institutional reality in Easter Island remained unchanged. In 1911, for instance, despite a fine of ten pesos imposed by the Company administrator, isolation measures were not successful and there was not much concern about this.¹⁵¹ The Company had little interest in controlling the disease, for other than during a few weeks in the year, the Rapanui population was not a valuable labor force.¹⁵² Meanwhile, Edwards and the media continued publicizing the leper’s “sad state of abandonment” and cajoling the populace with humanitarian discourse and donation initiatives: Easter Island “needs your compassion and your charity.”¹⁵³

One cannot emphasize enough the effect that Edwards’ narrative had in the construction of the Easter Island imaginary in Chile. Upon Edwards’ return, *El Mercurio* (Chile’s largest newspaper) announced, “a memory of Easter Island cannot be made without that plague occupying a part of the commentary.”¹⁵⁴ What is most interesting about Edwards’ discourse for my purposes is his moralistic stance. Edwards highlights that “scrabbled in those two ranches were men and women, young and elder.”¹⁵⁵ In addition, not only did lepers “lack the most indispensable

144 Sebastián Englert. *Primer Siglo Cristiano de la Isla de Pascua*, 1864-1964. (Villarrica: Imprimatur, 1964), 78-9.

145 Louis Castex. *Los secretos de la Isla de Pascua*. (Santiago: J. Almendros, 1973), 129.

146 Raul Marin. *Pascua: La Isla Lejana y Misteriosa*. (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1945), 11.

147 Alberto Hotus. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

148 Michel Foucault. *Madness and Civilization*. (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1960]), 52.

149 Rolf Foerster. “Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)” <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 161.

150 Walter Knoche. *Reseña Botánica sobre la Isla de Pascua. Según la expedición Meteorológica de 1911 a bordo de la Corbeta Baquedano*. (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1913).

151 Ibid.

152 Edwin Ferdon. “Easter Island Exchange Systems.” In: *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (1958).

153 Rafael Edwards. *La Isla de Pascua: Consideraciones Expuestas Acerca de Ella Por Mons. Rafael Edwards, Obispo y Vicario Castrense, Que La Visitó En Julio de 1916 y Junio 1917*. (Santiago [Chile]: Imprenta de San José, 1918), 13.

154 *El Mercurio* [Santiago], “La lepra y sus efectos.” 31 of August, 1916.

155 Rafael Edwards. *La Isla de Pascua: Consideraciones Expuestas Acerca de Ella Por Mons. Rafael Edwards*,

elements of life,” but also the islanders in general “lack[ed] beds and all the necessary utensils for life,” Edwards claimed.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, instead of a savage condition, the Chilean government began to see leprosy as a socially and economically produced disaster that could be treated as a problem and remediated. The government proceeded to revise the Company’s contract, stating that the “imperative regime in Easter Island has subsumed its inhabitants to misery.”¹⁵⁷ Indeed, as Delsing argues, it was “mainly by Edward’s influence” that the Chilean government became more involved in Rapa Nui.¹⁵⁸

An interesting dynamic emerged with Edwards’ intervention, namely a conflict of different forms of government over the Rapanui: the Company’s sovereign power and the Chilean nation-state’s modern power. Sovereign power was ancestrally the right of the *‘ariki mau* [supreme chief], who through his *mana* “held the power of life and death over the common people.”¹⁵⁹ The Company saw itself as a replacement for the ancient chiefly order. Company officials were indeed involved in the murder of the Rapanui’s last legitimate king (Riro Kaiña), and thereof saw Easter Island as a territory and its own power as sovereign. That is, the Company reserved the power of death over the Rapanui within a simple territorial distribution—anyone who passed the boundaries of Haña Roa could legally be shot dead. Moreover, as any “good sovereign,” the Company was “well placed” within the Easter Island territory, with a “good spatial layout,” namely one in which the Rapanui were locked into a Western-gridded town with a Church and with individual nuclear homes.¹⁶⁰ The Chilean nation-state, on the other hand, exercised disciplinary rather than territorial power over the Rapanui population, that is, power over the body of individuals rather than over the territory they inhabit.¹⁶¹

C. *Biopower and Personhood*

In this section I argue that as the Chilean nation-state slowly took full control over the treatment of lepers, the Rapanui began to be framed more and more along the lines of what Foucault calls biopower. Biopower as a historical concept designates a change in the way men are governed. It emerged in 18th century Europe in the “intermediary cluster of relations” between two poles of development: an “anatomy-politics of the human body” and a “bio-politics of the human population.” The former involves disciplines over individual bodies in a population and their “integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.” The latter (a historically more recent development) acts on the “species body,” that is, “propagation, births and mortality...

Obispo y Vicario Castrense, *Que La Visitó En Julio de 1916 y Junio 1917*. (Santiago [Chile]: Imprenta de San José, 1918), 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁵⁷ Rolf Foerster. “Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)” <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Riet Delsing. “Articulating Rapa Nui: Polynesian Cultural Politics in a Chilean Nation-State.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Santa Cruz 2009), 104.

¹⁵⁹ Patrick Kirch. *How Chiefs Became Kings: Divine Kingship and the Rise of Archaic States in Ancient Hawaii*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 38.

¹⁶⁰ Miguel Fuentes. “Compañía, estado y comunidad isleña. Entre el ‘pacto colonial’ y la resistencia. Antecedentes y nuevas informaciones con respecto al periodo 1917-1936.” In: *La Compañía explotadora de Isla de Pascua—Patrimonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui*. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011.

¹⁶¹ Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1977]), 24-7.

with all the conditions that can cause these to vary.” It involves regulatory controls over an entire population—not over individuals. These two poles created, according to Foucault, a practice of power encapsulated by the figure of “make live and let die,” which came to replace the sovereign right to “let live and make die.”¹⁶²

I focus in particular on the effects that this had on the Rapanui concept of the person. There is a broad literature on the effects of modernity on personhood. Michael Lambek states, “it was part of the transformation in European society over the last few hundred years... to emphasize temporally continuous and maximally accountable persons.”¹⁶³ Lambek calls this modern construct of the person the forensic as opposed to the mimetic construct, the latter of which I think of as the dividual person outlined in Chapter 1. Edward LiPuma similarly argues that “encompassment [by modernity]... [generates] a new and more powerful context for the *expression* of individuality.”¹⁶⁴ The modernity power relations that “presuppose the individual as the paramount social value” have come to regiment these societies, and therefore the expression and practice of individuality are better enabled than those of dividuality.¹⁶⁵

For Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, a rigorous use of biopower entails:

One or more truth discourses about the ‘vital’ character of living human beings; an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health.¹⁶⁶

I now proceed to trace how each of these four qualifiers for the practice of biopower emerged in Easter Island after Edwards’ visit. A way to understand Edwards’ intervention is as an incipient form of what Peter Redfield calls “minimalist biopolitics,” focused on survival rather than welfare.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, initially, other than during the one-month visit of Edwards and other government representatives to the island, it was the Company that reserved full jurisdiction over the treatment of leper. The Company’s efforts from this time onward are perhaps best understood as a minimum way to maintain a healthy relation with the Chilean government, as a way to keep Rapanui life at the bare minimum of survival. At the time of Edwards’ visit, the Company fed lepers “milk and meat sufficient for their sustenance; but it seems that that is the limit of [the foreman’s] obligations, for he never [went] to see them.”¹⁶⁸

Upon his unconditional authority, Edwards promptly began amateur triaging efforts during his first visit to the island in 1916. After returning to Santiago, the medic who accompanied

162 Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I: An Introduction. (New York: Vintage, 1990 [1976]), 139.

163 Michael Lambek. “The Continuous and Discontinuous Person: Two Dimensions of Ethical Life.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 19, no. 4 (2013), 842-3.

164 Edward LiPuma. “Modernity and Forms of Personhood in Melanesia.” In: *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Michael Lambek and Adrew Strathern (eds.) (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1998), 72.

165 *Ibid.*, 61, 70-73.

166 Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. “Biopower Today.” In: *BioSocieties* 1 (2006), i.

167 Peter Redfield. *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors Without Borders*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 344.

168 Rolf Foerster. “Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)” <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 167.

him declared that "four of them with all certainty were lepers, three or four of them had an unclear diagnosis, and some, without a doubt, presented no symptoms".¹⁶⁹ By placing individual Rapanui into different categories, Edwards for the first time put Rapanui bodies in a standardized scale of improvement. It was also in the context of Edwards' visit that Rapanui civil registrations were for the first time collected, the purpose being to determine how many people were dying of leprosy.¹⁷⁰ This incipient form of bio-politics gave each person one name so that their lives could be traced from birth to death, thus making the Rapanui population independent individuals continuous in space and time. But it was not until much later that such individualized bureaucratic mechanisms began to take effect in the Rapanui's daily lives. The first who felt an effect were precisely the lepers. Like the lepers in the Philippines who were "enrolled in American modernity in advance of the nonleprous," by 1933 the Rapanui lepers became the first incipient Chilean citizens on the island.¹⁷¹ While the civil registry for the normal population continued rudimentary, for the lepers it included:

Their names and last names (paternal and maternal), sex, current age and age at time of seclusion, marital status, name of their parents and whether or not they are alive, first names and maternal and paternal last names of their spouses, names of their children or their closest kin, nature and state of disease, name and last name of medic or practitioner that has certified the registration and requested the person's seclusion, as well as a signature of said official.¹⁷²

In 1933, however, Navy Doctor Tejada found lepers in a similar condition as Edwards had found them in 1916, "dragging themselves, [like] live wounds." Tejada, who became the key authority in the treatment of leprosy after Edwards, triaged the lepers using a more technical vocabulary than Edwards, further individualizing each patient. Tejada also hardened isolation politics by staunchly prohibiting the visits to and from Hana Roa that were commonplace until then.¹⁷³ According to Foerster, such a change of attitude embodied by Tejada was due to the contemporaneous president's mission to improve the Chilean race, consistent with the interpretation I am making here with the frame of biopower.¹⁷⁴

As Warwick Anderson remarks about leprosy in the Philippines, far from abandoned, lepers were "selected for disciplinary normalization," corresponding to the anatomo-politics pole of biopower.¹⁷⁵ The first step in this process was the acquisition of a "standardized individuality" by each person, who thus took more the semblance of a "distinct case" than a human person.¹⁷⁶ Thus the fluid personhood explored in Chapter 1 was re-fashioned into a

169 Ximena Torres Cautivo. "Papiano Tuki de Isla de Pascua: El Último Leproso." *El Mercurio* [Santiago] 13 of September, 2002: pg. 26.

170 Ximena Trengove. *Easter Island, Chile*, 2014. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

171 Warwick Anderson. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 179.

172 Alvaro Tejada. "La lepra en la Isla de Pascua." Professional paper presented to opt for a degree as Commander surgeon. Santiago, Chile, 1944.

173 Alvaro Tejada. "La lepra en la Isla de Pascua." Professional paper presented to opt for a degree as Commander surgeon. Santiago, Chile, 1944, 11-14.

174 Rolf Foerster. "Rapa Nui: La lepra y sus derivados (estado de excepción, cárcel...)" <http://www.captura.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/133587/Foerster_RN_063_2012.pdf?sequence=1> Accessed January 24th, 2014. Last updated 2013, 169.

175 Warwick Anderson. "Leprosy and Citizenship." In: *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 6 (1998), 723.

176 Warwick Anderson. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the*

constitutive individuality, “from a messy past of illness and superstition toward a contained, therapeutic future.”¹⁷⁷ Likewise, Tejada made it such that lepers were divided into “men, women, boys, and girls,” and correspondingly assigned to each of the four shacks. A practitioner from the army began to inspect each leper individually, specifically his or her “alimentation, etiquette, [and] medical condition,” as well as to keep a “biographical record, periodically taking note of important alterations in the disease’s evolution.”¹⁷⁸ Lepers came to be “deemed more medically needy, desocialized, and hence more docile.”^{179,180} Therefore, far from being eradicated, the life of lepers began to be fostered as exemplars for the rest of the citizenry

Another aspect of this process of improvement included the improvement of inhabitation conditions. A report from the Navy in 1936 lists the monthly distribution of food as follows:

Leprosarium: 31 (sheep); Charles Teao (bay practice): 8; Hipólito Ika (for fiscal work): 4; leprosarium nurse: 3; subdelegation consumption: 10. Those who most consume are the leprosarium and the subdelegation.¹⁸¹

Whereas the rest of the population (494 people in 1937) were able to “complement” the meagre 12 sheep they received at the time “with marine resources, except when these were scarce,” lepers (numbering around 20) received 31 monthly sheep, as well as 10 litres of milk.^{182,183,184} The leper was thus set in a “single trajectory from illness to health and from primitive to civilized.”¹⁸⁵ In 1936 the Chilean government published a document by the name of “Rules for the Internal Regime of Life and Work in Easter Island,” which “consisted of 80 articles, regulating every single aspect of island life.”¹⁸⁶ With the arrival of nuns to the island in 1938, this model then became generalized to the rest of the population. The Rapanui were no longer abandoned but submitted to a moral and ethical reform.

The Chilean press took hold of Tejada’s visit to re-invent the image of the island developed in the context of Edwards’ statements. An article in September 1939 declared, “leprosy is disappearing, for it has been possible to establish... a methodical regimen of life [and] appropriate

Philippines. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 168.

177 Ibid., 178.

178 Alvaro Tejada. “La lepra en la Isla de Pascua.” Professional paper presented to opt for a degree as Commander surgeon. Santiago, Chile, 1944.

179 Warwick Anderson. “Leprosy and Citizenship.” In: *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 6 (1998), 723.

180 Max Puelma Bunster. *Un viaje a la Isla de Pascua: relatos de viaje*. (Santiago: Ediciones Valores Literarios, 1971), 157.

181 Manuel Olalquiaga. “Memoria del Subdelegado Marítimo.” In *Archivo del Ministerio de Marina* 3675 (1936), pg. 25.

182 Francisca Santana; Rodrigo Retamal; and Miguel Fuentes. “Modos de vida y condiciones de salud en Rapa Nui durante el período de la Compañía Explotadora.” In: *La Compañía explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patromonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui*. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011), 201, 206.

183 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 172.

184 Carmen Gloria Gutierrez and Miguel Fuentes. “Vivir en tiempos de la Compañía Explotadora de Isla de Pascua. Una lectura al proceso desde el testimonio de los isleños.” In: *La Compañía explotadora de Isla de Pascua— Patromonio, memoria e Identidad en Rapa Nui*. Claudio Cristino and Miguel Fuentes (eds.) (Santiago: Ediciones Escaparte: 2011), 267.

185 Warwick Anderson. “Leprosy and Citizenship.” In: *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 6 (1998), 708.

186 Riet Delsing. “Articulating Rapa Nui: Polynesian Cultural Politics in a Chilean Nation-State.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Santa Cruz 2009), 127.

alimentation." Interestingly, this same article gave the first indication of a mode of subjectification. The article notes that:

Excellent and good predisposition that exists among the natives to voluntarily submit themselves to the medical prescriptions, for, given their fear of the possibility of entering the category of "incurable leper," they scrupulously comply with the personal hygiene recommendations that are dictated to them.¹⁸⁷

A more thorough change in this regard came in 1946, when for the first time Humberto Molina Luco and Federico Felbermayer, who would soon create the "Society of Friends of Easter Island," arrived to the island. While humanitarian discourse around leprosy on the island stems all the way back to Edwards' intervention, and was also strong in 1936—when a Navy official published an article titled "The Moral Obligation of Chile" and fundraised through post stamps—the Society of Friends marked a moment of institutionalization of humanitarianism.¹⁸⁸ A problematization of the life conditions of the Rapanui as an emergency and the necessity of humanitarian-scientific intervention followed. In January 1948, *El Mercurio* announced that the yearly ship had "important scientific objectives." The ship brought materials donated by the Society of Friends for the construction of a modern leprosarium with three facilities, under the inspection of an architect.¹⁸⁹ Although a decade earlier leprosy was considered in the process of eradication, Molina Luco ominously declared that "in 1910 there were 9 lepers in the entire island; today there are more than 50."¹⁹⁰ A state of emergency was created and a specialist was soon sent to the island—Doctor Daniel Camus—who was ordered to conduct a "biosocial" study of the Rapanui.

During Camus' visits to the island the leper colony itself seemed to be in better conditions than during Edwards' and Tejedá's visits—lepers slept not on the bare floor but on wooden berths, and possessed some furniture and utensils and a rain water tank, as well as a stone kitchen.¹⁹¹ Yet what was of most concern for Camus, as it had been for Edwards and Tejedá, was the moral conditions of the leprosarium:

They live in complete promiscuity; this has brought in occasions grave moral relaxations, and in more than one occasion leper women have become pregnant and children have fallen victims to the disease. In order to avoid this, the only solution is division of the sexes.¹⁹²

As a result, strict measures for moral improvement were soon undertaken. I liken these measures to Foucault's anatomico-politics pole, though the focus here was not so much on optimizing the body as it was on submitting it to new ethical norms:

The pavilion of men was in the north side and that of women was in the south side; they were terminally prohibited from looking at each other. In between they constructed a shed with a straw roof where Father Sebastian offered mass on Sundays, after he did so for the rest of the town. Four or five Easter Islanders were vigilantes, so that the lepers

187 "La Soberanía de Chile en 'Pascua' Cumplirá Hoy 51 Años." *El Mercurio* [Santiago]. 9 of September, 1939.

188 Sepúlveda Whittle, Tomás. "Dominación Chilena en la Isla de Pascua." In: *Revista de Marina* (1936), pg. 685.

189 "Con importantes misiones científicas zarpó ayer el 'Allipén' rumbo a la Isla de Pascua." *El Mercurio* [Santiago]. 3 of January, 1948.

190 "La Sociedad de Amigos de Isla de Pascua agradece reciente editorial." *La Estrella* [Valparaíso]. 21 of July, 1948.

191 Daniel Camus. "Estudio Bio-Social en la Isla de Pascua." In: *Revista Geográfica de Chile* 2, no. 2 (1949), 26.

192 *Ibid.*, 33.

would not look at each other nor would the men and women talk to each other, because they could agree to meet at night and run away and have relations.¹⁹³

Where anatomo-politics are truly present is in the way in which leper life during the time of the Society of Friends intervention continued to be nourished well and over the life of non-leprous Rapanui. Whereas for the rest of the population there remained only one hospital with twelve beds under the care of a nurse practitioner from the army—who was “medic, surgeon, midwife, and dentist” at the same time—the new leprosarium contained “four new facilities of cement and stone,” with a “pre-fabricated home for two nuns, workshop rooms, entertainment lounges, a nursery, a chapel, and a small lab.”¹⁹⁴ The lepers were also assigned a paid cook to serve them “breakfast (coffee and milk and a large piece of bread), lunch (beef or pork stew and cereal, bread, and coffee), teatime snacks (the same as breakfast), and dinner (beef stew and cereal and bread, and sometimes vegetable and fruits).”¹⁹⁵ Five permanent employees and one nurse cared for the 38 lepers, who lived with the following additional amenities.¹⁹⁶

Pantry, kitchen, laundry... comfortable and spacious pavilions... beautiful gardens and groves.... According to the people who have visited the island lately, the most beautiful part on it is the leprosarium.... We also acquired two Zenith radios... with their respective speakers, which permits them to be in daily contact with their distant nation and constantly listen to didactic and patriotic lectures that are dedicated to them.¹⁹⁷

Other than bolstering the material aspect of leper lives' quality, Camus was keen on fostering a strong work ethic. According to Camus, the best way to enforce isolation was a “tall wall,” which “[could] be made with the island’s stones and cement by the lepers themselves.”¹⁹⁸ This rationality echoes what Anderson calls “performance of abjection,” with the “promise of fashioning a thoroughly modern identity,” one epitomized by work ethic and self-restraint at the core of the Rapanui’s subjectivity.¹⁹⁹ Camus’ thoughts in this regard are evident in his reflections:

Their life is in reality idle, for other than cleaning their houses and making their beds, they have nothing to do. They have been given plots beside the facilities.... As entertainment they are taken at times to nearby beaches so that they can swim and fish, under the supervision of a guard, and each facility on a different day... There is a necessity of giving them work, to men in workshops of agriculture or mechanics, and to women in workshops of knitting.... For all, healthy entertainments like ping-pong and a small library, and a basketball court are necessary.²⁰⁰

193 Patricia Stambuk. *Rongo: La historia oculta de la Isla de Pascua*. (Santiago: Pehuén, 2010), 187.

194 Daniel Camus. “Salubridad y Morbilidad en Isla de Pascua.” In: *Runa* 4 (1951), 86-7.

195 Daniel Camus. “Informe Sanitario de la Isla de Pascua.” In *Runa* 4 (1951a), 7-10.

196 Daniel Camus. “La Isla de Pascua o Rapa-Nui: Su Biogeografía.” In: *Revista Universitaria Santiago* 35, no.1 (1950), 125-7.

197 *Sociedad Amigos de la Isla de Pascua. Memoria: May 1950 – May 1951*, pg. 3-4. Accessed at William Mulloy Library.

198 Daniel Camus. “Informe Sanitario de la Isla de Pascua.” In *Runa* 4 (1951a), 7-10.

199 Warwick Anderson. “Leprosy and Citizenship.” In: *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 6 (1998), 718.

200 Daniel Camus. “Informe Sanitario de la Isla de Pascua.” In *Runa* 4 (1951a), 7-10.

At the same time that Company and Chilean government officials forced lepers into a laborious lifestyle, they subjected the rest of the population to an institution known as *lunes fiscales*. During *lunes fiscales* [fiscal Mondays], officials would force all Rapanui to work with no remuneration, as retribution for their “laziness.” This practice first emerged at the time when Camus travelled to the island and persisted through the 1960s, when the Rapanui finally became Chilean citizens.²⁰¹ Camus’ perspective on the matter is interesting because he did not reduce their “laziness” to an ethnic proclivity; “they are not lazy, but idle,” he stated, “for the adequate conditions for work on the island do not exist.”²⁰² Camus suggested that the entire population urgently needed the government to teach women how to knit so that they may wear more clothes; he also suggested that the Rapanui be trained to have breakfast and have a more routinized alimentation, and that they should be encouraged to practice sports.²⁰³ Soon after the Society of Friends built the new leprosarium, they sent a pre-fabricated school to the island. Camus was evidently proud that as a result of this intervention boys started to go to school in the morning while girls did so in the evening; and that children were fed in school (2 assorted plates, a dessert, and milk).²⁰⁴

One of the most innovative measures Camus took was to triage lepers in a different manner than his predecessors, allowing for a new category, that of “controlled ambulatory” lepers (11 in number), who may live in town but must come for periodic examinations to the local hospital. I read this change as a move from a disciplinary ethics to self-government, as would Anderson, self-government being the ultimate goal of biopower.^{205,206} For Camus, isolation disregarded “immense moral suffering.” The new method involved making periodic exams of the entire population, and treating only those highly contagious or those in whom leprosy had been recently detected. Instead of treating lepers one by one (except in extreme cases), Camus’ idea was to improve the sanitary conditions of the entire island, such that the epidemic could be eventually kept at bay through self-government.²⁰⁷

Such was the Society of Friends’ influence that it resulted in the abrogation of the Company’s lease. As a result of a letter sent by the Society to the President of Chile on April 12, 1951, which cited Camus’ 1947 report about the Company’s failure to treat lepers properly as promised, the Company lost its claim to the island in 1953—this time indefinitely.²⁰⁸ This moment marks the end of sovereign and the beginning of what Foucault calls a “new pastoral power” over the Rapanui. This “new pastoral power” like traditional pastoral power aims to “achieve individual salvation,” “does not look after the whole community but each individual in particular, during his entire life,” and “cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds.” Unlike traditional pastoral power it ensures people’s salvation in this world, by constructs such as “health,” “well-being,” “security,” etc., not the next.²⁰⁹ No longer would Rapanui persons interact

201 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 117.

202 Daniel Camus. “Estudio Bio-Social en la Isla de Pascua.” In: *Revista Geográfica de Chile* 2, no. 2 (1949), 36.

203 *Ibid.*, 33.

204 “La Isla de Pascua o Rapa-Nui: Su Biogeografía.” In: *Revista Universitaria* 35, no. 1 (1950), pg. 125-127.

205 Warwick Anderson. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 171.

206 Tom Scott-Smith. “Control and Biopower in Contemporary Humanitarian Aid: The Case of Supplementary Feeding.” In: *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27, no. 3 (2014).

207 Daniel Camus. “Salubridad y Morbilidad en Isla de Pascua.” In: *Runa* 4 (1951), 90-2.

208 Julio Lanzarotti. “Tragic Island: Misfortunes and Mysteries of Chile’s Most Remote Possession.” In: *Americas* 5, no. 4 (1953), 45.

209 Michel Foucault in Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and*

with each other or with their landscape in fluid, relational, performative modes, but rather in rigid, preconceived, scripted modes. Again, lepers served as experimental subjects of this new kind of subjectification, which was then generalized to the rest of the population.

Just as the issue of work ethic had been remedied in lepers before, a move to self-government as a basic governing principle of the Chilean nation-state over the entire Rapanui population lagged behind. While lepers were being submitted to multiple new individualized treatments after the Company's lease termination, the rest of the population was under exclusive Navy control. Lacking the political infrastructure to send civil government services to the island, after Company officials left the island, the Chilean nation-state maintained its presence through the Navy. The Navy maintained a strict disciplinary system, similar to those of Tejada and Camus over the lepers. Such systems, as breeders of self-government, seem to be necessary before the conferral of full citizenship to a people.²¹⁰

In 1964, the year of the rebellion through which the Rapanui forced the Chilean government to grant them citizenship, the Medical Expedition to Easter Island arrived. The expedition claimed to be doing something novel in the medical field: "To observe the islanders in a way that has never before happened to a whole people: a total population, not a sample." METEI brought the materials to make a complete scientific study centre: 24 collapsible trailer units and 38 scientists, covering everything from marine biology to sociology. The first step was to find out who everybody was and where everybody was. The expansion of the institutional model of the leprosarium as a controlling, individualizing, pastoral institution thus became generalized to the entire island. The narrator for the METEI documentary himself puts it best:

The mystery of where the islanders came from is to be resolved not by brave adventurers, but by painstaking scientific measurement. Their isolation will soon be over; it is in urgent necessity to learn everything about them now, before the airport is built.²¹¹

The airport was built three years later, and isolation was over. What was lost that METEI was able to glimpse at for one last time? In what way are the Rapanui people who were freed and whose island became public in the 1960s fundamentally different from the Rapanui people who were confined on their island, like a relic, to be seen one last time by METEI in the 1960s?

In the early 2000s, the leprosarium was demolished and replaced by a high school, *La Aldea Educativa*, built for local Rapanui youth. Where before there was a system of socialization (lepers being categorized and remedied by condition or by gender), now there is another system of socialization (children being categorized and remedied). Lilli Frechet and Ximena Trengove, two women married to Rapanui men, petitioned the Rapanui mayor of the island to save one of the walls of the leprosarium from demolition, as a way to honour the Rapanui lepers who had once lived and died there. The mayor did not heed these women's petition and the whole debate did not receive public attention. When these two women later restored the leper cemetery and were able to link some of the graves with the names of deceased lepers, the Rapanui population received their gesture with either indifference or opprobrium. Only a few Rapanui attended the

Hermeneutics. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 212-3.

210 Jacinta Arthur. "Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations." (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012), 117.

211 *Island Observed*. The Medical Expedition to Easter Island Team. The National Film Board of Canada, 1964.

service given at the restored cemetery.²¹² Leprosy may be a past to forget for the Rapanui, but it is also a past that forgets them, the leper being a figure for the period in history when Rapanui were submitted to modern state control.

However, if leprosy was indeed “Chilean flag” for the Rapanui, in what ways do the Rapanui today flag the psychopolitics of melancholy they are subjected to? How do they grasp the process’ future possibilities in the present, understand the process as part of a long history of disaster, and avoid the step that keeps on continuously putting the indigenous subject one step behind?

III. CHAPTER 3: THE UNCANNY “Between Easter Island and Rapa Nui”: Ontological Realignments and the Everyday

On my third day of fieldwork it was past midnight when I finally returned to Eddie Tuki’s house, where I stayed during my entire first field season (May-July 2013). Eddie felt my presence and called me to the kitchen. He was drinking whisky and watching a Chilean soap opera in Spanish. “It is past midnight! Tell them to get out of here!” he exclaimed, gesturing at me to turn around and close the door behind me. This was the first time I encountered the notion of *varua*. Eddie proceeded to blame me for his nightmares the previous night. He told me that the *varua* had been able to enter the house, enter his dreams, and torment him. He had had to recite *pata’uta’u* for the *varua* to leave. “You are not from here. When you are not from here, and it is past midnight, they follow you.” It was difficult for me to tell whether or not he was swindling me. What does it mean for Eddie, “a pure-blooded Rapanui,” to be tormented by *varua* in his place of residence? Did the *varua* torment him that night because of my presence? It is a place to which I do not belong: wouldn’t they have tormented *me*?

I have been trained to take statements like Eddie’s very seriously. As Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it, “We need to move away from [the assumption] that the human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end ‘social facts,’ that the social somehow exists prior to them.”²¹³ This, I think, is what Viveiros de Castro means by the “decolonization of thought,” which takes the task of anthropologists not to elucidate how others think of this-or-that but how this-or-that thinks, e.g. not how others think of kinship, but how kinship exists for the other.²¹⁴ The crucial move here is to stop taking Cartesian (and Durkheimian) constructs as an absolute frame of reference, and begin to use the concepts of others to revise our own concepts and therefore our concept of the other. The existence of the ancestral oneiric reality of spirits vis-à-vis the modern virtual reality of a television screen, as well as Eddie’s intoxication, however, tempted me to downplay his statement as his own idiosyncratic figment. What does the Western time-reckoning concept of “midnight” have anything to do with ancestral spirits? At the same time, I knew that the argument has been made, in Haiti, that “dispossession accomplished by slavery became the model for repossession in vodou [sorcery].”²¹⁵ Eduardo Kohn makes a similar point about the

212 Ximena Trengove. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

213 Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton [N.J.]: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

214 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Peter Skafish (editor and translator). (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2014).

215 Joan Dayan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 36.

Runa of Ecuador when he says that domination “is caught up in a form that takes shape in the realm of the spirit masters of the forest.”²¹⁶ Though certainly an ancestral order of knowledge, the entanglements of *varua* with modern colonial processes on the island became my main anchor when inquiring into how the broken Rapanui lifeworld may be remade.

If leprosy was indeed a process by which the person was individualized and therefore set apart from the dividual lifeworld I described in Chapter 1, then leprosy produced what I call, following Anthony Giddens, “ontological insecurity.”²¹⁷ Giddens defines “ontological security” as “confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear.”²¹⁸ Ontological *insecurity*, as a mistrust of the appearance of the world and uncertainty about what the world is, can therefore be likened to, in Toufic’s language, the seemingly absurd notion that one’s re-activated homeplace is counterfeit.²¹⁹ In fact, in my experience most of the Rapanui people talk of the landscape using a trope of danger, often demanding certain ritualized habits (e.g. softness of voice) as precautionary measures. In this chapter I focus on Rapanui struggles against ontological insecurity that try to push the island from being “in between,” to becoming once again an enchanted cosmos.

It is true that ancestrally *akuaku* and *varua* of certain clans attacked the progeny of other clans. However, attacks like these were not the norm in ancient times—in fact, they were precisely the *break* with the norm. Today, according to Valeska Chavez, “one has to tread carefully, with respect, in all of the corners of the island, always asking for permission.”²²⁰ More generally, I was repeatedly told that any modification of the landscape, including its contamination by urine or excrement or trivial interventions such as the re-placement of a certain stone, *might* result in attack by *varua*. The notion that aggression on the part of *varua* today is the norm follows the notion that the entire island does not belong to the self but to world heritage.

This is not to say that the landscape before its transformation by outsiders was considered a safe place. As Ingold points out, indigenous circumpolar people with whom he works perceive the environment as a labyrinth rather than as a maze. The main difference is that while in a maze each movement is premeditated and the world is therefore not opened through being-in-the-world but constrained before being-in-the-world, in a labyrinth there is no intention of arrival, for each place is the destination to somewhere else. Movement in a labyrinth instead consists of attending to each step one takes, leading to a constant exposure of the body to its being-in-the-world. What I am contending here is that before becoming Museum Island, Rapa Nui was a maze; it is now a labyrinth.²²¹ Indeed, the island today is full of roads and signage that make each exploration of the island a task that is planned, rather than a task that leads you to experience ever new possibilities of being-in-the-world. The danger that most Rapanui ascribe to the island today is due to the fact that for the Rapanui the island is immanently still a labyrinth. The island’s transformation into a maze, then, hampers the exploratory self from attending to the world while still exposing the self to this world which one must attend. The island today, “between Rapa Nui and Easter Island,” is therefore by definition ontologically insecure, uncanny: an island that for the Rapanui is populated by dividual beings but that at the same time is frozen, untouchable.

216 Eduardo Kohn. *How Forests Think: Toward An Anthropology Beyond the Human*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 193.

217 Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. (Cambridge [U.K.]: Polity, 1991).

218 Antony Giddens. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. (Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge University Press, 1993 [1984]), 374.

219 Jalal Toufic. *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Redcat, 2009.

220 Valeska Chavez. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

221 Tim Ingold. “Anthropology and the Education of Attention.” UC Berkeley Distinguished Lecture in Anthropology. September 22, 2014.

In order to ground this notion I would like to start by alluding to the following case. Controversy stirred after schoolteacher Petero Huke assigned his students to make petroglyphs in designated places on the island. Anthropologist and well-known petroglyph specialist Georgia Lee’s response to this event reveals the new political dynamics created by the reconstruction of the island:

The petroglyphs left by the ancient islanders had significance and meaning; they were not causally made...Many islanders believe that, as long as these “modern” petroglyphs are created by a Rapanui, that somehow makes it permissible. We deplore this shortsightedness...Creating clumsy copies for a school project denigrates and cheapens them. And what kind of lessons will those students take with them...? They will believe that they are entitled to make petroglyphs wherever they wish...We, all of us—Rapanui and non-Rapanui—are the inheritors...The ancient Rapanui are long gone.²²²

Lee’s comments are essentially about the politics of ontology: what is the island and how do we value it according to what it is? It is in this sense that this chapter is “between Easter Island and Rapa Nui.” What the island *is* has become a matter of contestation. In its modern reconstructed ancestral form, is the island modern or ancestral? Is the island’s heritage the Rapanui’s or, as UNESCO would have it, the world’s? What Lee’s position above does is make every encounter with tradition for the always already modern Rapanui a false, inauthentic gain of true selfhood. James Clifford remarks about this notion when he states that the image of the “romantic primitive... could become a straightjacket, making every encounter with modernity...a contamination” for modern indigenous people.²²³ In this new psychopolitics, the past of the island is governed by an aura that makes it inaccessible. Lee is not negating the Rapanui’s indigenosity. What the modern Rapanui are “fail[ing] to respect,” from her point of view, is not “what it means to be Rapanui, but what the petroglyphs meant to their ancestors.”

The scope of this chapter is double. On the one hand, I wish to explore the ways in which the Rapanui are committed to being Rapanui through a government apparatus of project funds for the development of their culture that fails to respect the ontological and ethical entailments of Rapanui culture. On the other hand, I inquire into how the Rapanui create certain modes of being by which they are able to commit themselves to the ontological and ethical entailments of being Rapanui. As argued by Scheper-Hughes, one of the problems with Foucault’s theory of biopower is that it is “devoid of subjectivity,” that is, it ignores the will of the individual body as it is disciplined and controlled by the state.²²⁴ In this chapter I address this theoretical concern by focusing on how the Rapanui use their bodily connection with individual persons to resist the Chilean nation-state in its contemporary form as a biopower regime.

A. *Neocolonialist Indigenous Recognition*

If the island is conceived as Museum Island in its general form, from the point of view of the Rapanui it is also an “island of projects,” a figure I encountered often throughout my interviews,

222 Georgia Lee. “Modern Rapanui Petroglyphs.” In: *Rapa Nui Journal* 21, no. 2 (2007), 129.

223 James Clifford. “Traditional Futures,” in *Questions of Tradition*, eds. Mark Phillips and Gordon Schochet. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 156.

224 Nancy Scheper-Hughes. “The Primacy of the Ethical for a Militant Anthropology.” In *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995).

including when I interviewed the current mayor.²²⁵ In 1993 a Hollywood movie produced by Kevin Costner came to the island and pumped the economy with cash. The production hired around half of the entire population and gave them extremely high wages for the island's economy, leading to "superinflation."²²⁶ The only means Rapanui people have to sustain the high standards of wealth engendered by the economics of the movie production is by government project initiatives. The following statement captures the governmentality behind these initiatives:

The government of Chile is very astute. They created CODEIPA [Easter Island Commission of Development], part of CONADI [National Commission for Indigenous Development]. There is a project, and certain Rapanui ask for money, they are easily given the money. Project after project. Like a drug, little by little. While we are here trying to do *haka piri* [getting together], my cousin can't.²²⁷

CONADI was created in 1993, but stems from the *Acuerdo de Nueva Imperial* in 1989. Through this treaty, indigenous people promised "to channel their demands through participative mechanisms" in return of the government's recognition of indigenous rights. Recognition and economic dependency thus became entangled.²²⁸ One of the Chilean representatives on the island (an officer at the National Goods Office) further elucidated this practice of government when saying that the Rapanui are the "stars" of the indigenous world in Chile.

Here they have everything—they do not pay taxes, they have practically free healthcare, they only pay half the price of the airplane ticket... you name it. Why? Because they are the Rapanui. They have the *moai*. Their image is unique.²²⁹

Such a way of governing indigenous people has been called "welfare colonialism."²³⁰ For though the Rapanui are led to develop, they are not given freedom to develop in the way they deem best. While Rapanui people run CONADI and CODEIPA, they are run in an exogenous milieu. Karlo Huke gathers the practice of CONADI and CODEIPA in this regard best when stating that "they are the voice of the people, but they have the brain of the Chilean state."²³¹ What is the point of an indigenous language without a referent, a traditional economy without a function, and clan-based family reunions without clan-identity? The loss of *mana* embodied in the theft of the skull of Hotu Matu'a (see Introduction) signifies the rupture of a shared world. It is the remaking of this shared world that a successful initiative has to address. But instead,

The concentration of services and government buildings in Hanga Roa confirmed the settlement as the only inhabited center on the island, thus loosening more than ever the ties between the Rapanui and their ancestral lands.²³²

225 Petero Edmunds. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

226 Margaret Stanton. "Study of the Economics, Social, Cultural and Environmental Impacts of the Making of a Hollywood Movie on Easter Island, 1993." (Thesis, Brigham Young University, Department of Sociology, 1997), 50.

227 José Cardinali. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

228 Riet Delsing. "Articulating Rapa Nui: Polynesian Cultural Politics in a Chilean Nation-State." (PhD Diss., University of California, Santa Cruz 2009), 197-201.

229 Sebastián Lessman. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

230 Nikolas Peterson. "Welfare Colonialism and Citizenship: Politics, Economics, and Agency," in *Citizenship and Indigenous Australians: Changing Conceptions and Possibilities*. Nikolas Peterson and Will Sanders (ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

231 Karlo Huke in Delsing, 209.

232 Riet Delsing. "Articulating Rapa Nui: Polynesian Cultural Politics in a Chilean Nation-State." (PhD Diss.,

B. Historical Changes in Ancestral Categories of the Person

Tactical name changes—reflecting new articulations of resistance . . .—are familiar and necessary aspects of decolonizing indigenous politics.²³³

In this section I explore how the re-signification of ancestral Rapanui categories of the person in modernity carries analytic weight. During my fieldwork season on the island, my exploration of *varua* revealed a complex and at times jumbled taxonomy of other-than-human persons in Rapa Nui. It was unclear to me whether or not some of the categories I inquired into (see Chapter 1) are mutually exclusive and whether or not some of them are modern articulations. Upon re-inspection of the literature I realized that historically *akuaku* was the normative term, despite the fact today Rapanui people most commonly use *varua*. The first mention of *varua* that I could find in the literature is in Katherine Routledge’s 1919 study, which in a footnote mentions that *varua* are also used to refer to what in the body of the text she refers to as *akuaku*.²³⁴ More recently, however, both Werner Wolff and Edmundo Edwards mention *varua* as an ancient concept, as does Arthur.^{235,236,237} However, these ethnographers disagree as to what exactly *varua* means.

In exploring the historicity of the concept of *varua* emically, on the other hand, I realized that in fact there is a possibility that *varua* is a modern term for and possibly a different concept from categories of the person used by the “ancients.” Rapanui historian Cristián Moreno Pakarati told me that it was his impression that *varua* was borrowed from the Tahitian language,²³⁸ in which the Rapanui receive(d) all their ecclesiastical education, an interpretation supported by folklore master Isabel Pakarati.²³⁹ Moreno Pakarati further argues that there previously were three different categories, each of which has been collapsed today into the category of *varua*. These three categories are *kuhane*, which referred to what we would understand as the “soul”; *akuaku*, which referred to a non-human corporeal entity, usually an identifiable ancestor, that could take many forms; and *atua hiva*, which referred to mythic gods. Conversely, Joel Huke told me that *akuaku* was a term invented by Thor Heyerdahl in the 1950s and that the only ancient term for other-than-human person was *atua hiva*.²⁴⁰ Sorobabel Fati, an elder considered in the local community to be highly knowledgeable, however, affirmed that *varua*, by the time he was a child in the 1940s, was simply a common substitute for *akuaku*, which was the term used by the ancients.²⁴¹ What led to this indefiniteness when it comes to naming the other-than-human? Is it significant as an ontological principle or simply a matter of mindless diffusion?

By the time of the first prolonged visits to the Rapanui by outsiders (starting with the arrival of the first missionary in 1864), spirituality seemed less important than it is today. Now,

University of California, Santa Cruz 2009), 164.

233 James Clifford. “Traditional Futures,” in *Questions of Tradition*, eds. Mark Phillips and Gordon Schochet. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 17.

234 Katherine Routledge. *The Mystery of Easter Island*. (London: Cosimo Inc., 2007 [1919]), 238.

235 Werner Wolff. *Island of Death: A New Key to Easter Island’s Culture Through An Ethno-Psychological Study*. (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1948), 25.

236 Edmundo Edwards and Alexandra Edwards. *When the Universe Was an Island: Exploring the Cultural and Spiritual Cosmos of Ancient Rapa Nui*. (Hanga Roa: Hangaroa Press, 2013), 136.

237 Jacinta Arthur. “Now They Say the Land Is Not Ours: On Rapanui Worldviews and Land-Being Relations.” (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 2012).

238 Cristián Moreno Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

239 Isabel Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

240 Joel Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

241 Sorobabel Fati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

according to Valeska Chávez, “practically every Rapanui has had an experience, believes in, or has heard of the *varua*.”²⁴² Eugene Eyraud, the first missionary, mentions that, “religion seems to occupy the most insignificant place in their lives. I have never been able to notice any act truly religious.”²⁴³ In 1914, Routledge similarly states that spirits are simply mentioned before meals, but did not occupy a deeper role in contemporary society. In 1924, in turn, Macmillan Brown explicitly tells us “the later development [of a world of spirits] is very astonishing when we know that the Easter Islanders did not believe in a world of spirits beyond the grave.”²⁴⁴ In 1934, Alfred Metraux writes that *akuaku* are “mere names... We do not know even the customary residences of some of them.”²⁴⁵ Georges Montandon similarly states that, “Easter Islanders often sing old spiritual songs whose word to word meaning they cannot furnish.”²⁴⁶ The use of *varua* today—to signify multiple beliefs and practices—may therefore be portrayed as an oversimplification due to ignorance. In fact, Routledge was able to count as many as 90 *akuaku*, relative to the 28 Metraux counted in 1934, and the “21 or 24” I gathered from an interview with elder Sorobabel Fati.

Another interpretation of the increasing use of *varua* rather than *akuaku* is that the Rapanui are aware of the co-optation of their spiritual practices by the Chilean nation-state. Such is the case with *umu tahu*, an auspicious ritual that involves the cooking of a sacred chicken, which is today used in the secular ceremony during the “inauguration of new elected officials.” Young even identifies a Rapanui term, *roereo mai* [lie to me], which is used to describe practices like these of Chilean officials. Young further claims that the Rapanui “are not confused by the *reoreo mai* of *me`e Tire* [Chilean discourse].”²⁴⁷

C. *Bad Death*

The morning after I first ethnographically encountered the term *varua* in the context of Eddie’s accusation, he offered to give me a ride on his scooter to downtown Hana Roa. On our way, as usual, Eddie came across *taina* [family] and stopped to offer any help they may need. Eddie talked to one of his *taina*, a young man, in Rapanui. At the end of the conversation the young man told Eddie, in Spanish, “at least she did not take me.” Eddie later casually informed me that the young man was his nephew and that his younger brother had died electrocuted some weeks ago. On the day following the misfortune they had found the fresh corpse of a cirrhotic old woman who, unbeknownst to anyone, had died alone in a nearby shack. Normally, as McCall states, “death for the Rapanui should be understood by the person undergoing the process... a process that once began can be even reversed by the dying person.”²⁴⁸ For instance, there is the case of the mother of several of my collaborators, María Rosario (Porotu), who was tired of the politics of the island and one day told her sixteen children that she would be returning to *Po*. According to Piru, she

242 Valesca Chavez. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

243 Eugene Eyraud. *Early Visitors to Easter Island 1864-1877 The Reports of Eugene Eyraud, Hippolyte Roussel, Pierre Loti and Alphonse Pinart*. Ann M. Altman (trans.) Honolulu: Easter Island Foundation, 2004 [1864].

244 Macmillan Brown. *The Riddle of the Pacific*. Sydney: T.F. Unwin Ltd., 1924.

245 Alfred Metraux. *Ethnology of Easter Island*. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1967 (1940).

246 Georges Montandon. “Easter Island: A Case of Social Change.” In: *Ethno Logische Zeitschrift Zürich*. Verlag Peter Lang: Las Vegas, 1978.

247 Forrest Young. “Unwriting ‘Easter Island’: Listening to Rapa Nui.” (PhD. Diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa 2011), 157-9.

248 Grant McCall. “Reaction To Disaster: Continuity and Change in Rapanui Social Organization.” (PhD. Diss., Australian National University, 1976), 145.

walked into an ancestral cave, never to be found again, despite their efforts. On the other hand, spirits of persons who die “bad deaths”—when death “occurs at the wrong place... and time” and no symbolic resolution can regenerate life (after death)—may not be able to settle “themselves to places associated with their ancestors.”^{249,250} What Eddie’s nephew meant was that he was lucky not to have been on the island at the time of his brother’s death; the *varua* would have chosen him.

It is of course conceivable that the cases of bad death increased in colonial times given the disruption of Rapanui rituals. The figure of the leper in Easter Island captures not only the individualization of the Rapanui person and a break with the dividual lifeworld, but also bad death. Lepers were buried in a hasty manner. Until 2001 when two Chilean residents rebuilt the leper cemetery, none of the graves were identifiable; with the help of the last surviving leper, these women were able to identify three of the graves. The rest of the graves remain unnamed and the *varua* of the bodies buried within them remain unatoned. More generally, according to Te Pou Huke, there are several *varua* on the island today that pertain to identifiable people who suffered a bad death, including enemies. There is the story, for instance, of Bausita and Pito Pito, two outsiders who were killed by the Rapanui in the colonial era:

They named a stone Bausita, because of his death, where they found him, in Orito, near a cairn. Today most people believe that there are *varua* there. The same thing happened with *Pito Pito*. My great great grandfather killed him, near Mataveri. When I was 17 or 18, an uncle of mine went there with another uncle of mine to hunt eggs in a precipice. In other places we had no problems hunting eggs, but in that place the *varua* pushed us off. That night the *varua* went into my grandfather to tell him. Since then that is not a place to which we enter.²⁵¹

D. *Recovery in the Everyday*

How to think of the recovery of the Rapanui in terms of the unmaking of the uncanny? It is this seemingly impossible possibility that I examine in this section. I like to think of this possibility as what Povinelli calls “the otherwise,” which I understand using Viveiros de Castro’s reading as the “non-skeptical elicitation of [the] manifold of potentials for *how things could be*.”²⁵² If Museum Island can be taken, following Povinelli’s jargon, as a “dominant mode of being” for the island today, then the otherwise today are all those “forms of life” (from herein, *varua*) “that are at odds” with this dominant mode of being. Povinelli elaborates that when such a form of life emerges, “the dominant mode experiences this form as inside and yet foreign to its body.”²⁵³ If we can think of the dominant mode of being of Easter Island as a dividual lifeworld before the intrusion of outsiders, then we can say that these outsiders subverted this dominant mode of being through

249 Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry. *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 17.

250 Grant McCall. *Las Fundaciones de Rapanui*. (Easter Island, Chile: Museo Provincial R.P. Sebastian Englert, 1986), 103-104.

251 Te Pou Huke. Sacramento, California, 2014. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

252 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Morten Axel Pedersen, and Martin Holbraad. “The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions.” *Fieldsights—Theorizing the Contemporary*, Cultural Anthropology Online, January 13, 2014, <<http://culanth.org/fieldsights/462-the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions/>>

253 “Routes/Worlds.” In: *e-flux journal* 27 (2011), <http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_8888244.pdf>

the figure of the leper (leprosy, of course, being something that is inside yet foreign to the body). And if that is the case, then in this section I explore how uncanny experiences (experiences of encountering forms of life inside yet foreign to a dominant mode of being) may allow the Rapanui to re-animate their memoryscape.

What I focus on here is the way that other-than-human persons who underwent a bad death and whose primary mode of being is as haunters, may be the very means through which the Rapanui can regenerate connections with their dividual lifeworld. I insinuate that *varua* as a modern ancestral category of the person designates people who underwent a bad death. This is not to say, however, that experiences with *varua* are necessarily negative; rather they must be fostered and have the potential to become as healing as they are haunting. For Laura Bear in the Anglo-Indian community she studies, experiences with ghosts are “usually quite benign”: by “reifying the forces of the past... as external influences,” uncanny experiences allow people to fashion new modes of relating with their broken past.²⁵⁴ In his study of contemporary Sri Lanka, Sasanka Perera similarly argues that spirit mediums are able to account for the existence of those disappeared and “suggest ritual measures for assuring their safe return.”²⁵⁵ For some *hua'ai* [families] in Rapanui, as the one Young studied, indeed,

The presence of the *tupuna* [ancestors] is not lamented or feared as a haunting of ghosts as Westerners tend to conceive ancestors within the present. Blanka [his informant] clearly finds happiness in the metaphysical presence of her *tupuna* at the gathering... [They are] fun (*reka*) and happy (*koa*).²⁵⁶

Could *varua* serve as medium for the Rapanui to recover? Here we can cite Veena Das' formulation of the “critical event,” which transforms “existing lifeworlds in a way that seems almost hostile to the continuity of time.”^{257,258} If we understand the Rapanui's 1860s disaster and its aftermath as a critical event, then we can talk about ways that the community “forg[es] memory and forgetfulness in new ways.”²⁵⁹ As Frida Hastrup argues, the tsunami in the Tamil village she studies entails, for her subjects, that “we can no longer know the ways of the sea”; this notion is coupled with a new way of interacting and materializing the sea as it comes and is coming into being, in its new unpredictable ways.²⁶⁰

In his brilliant counter-narrative of the Vietnam War, Heonik Kwon talks about lost souls, including American souls, who as a result of death in action inhabit the space of bad death, “a

254 Laura Bear. “Ruins and Ghosts: The Domestic Uncanny and the Materialisation of Anglo-Indian Genealogies.” In: *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*, Janet Carsten (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 36, 46.

255 Sasanka Perera. “Spirit Possessions and Avenging Ghosts: Stories of Supernatural Activity as Narratives of Terror and Mechanisms of Coping and Remembering.” In: *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds (eds.) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 161.

256 Forrest Young. “Unwriting ‘Easter Island’: Listening to Rapa Nui.” (PhD. Diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa 2011), 110.

257 Veena Das. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 5-6.

258 Lisa Stevenson. “The Ethical Injunction to Remember.” In: *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 174.

259 Veena Das. *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 8.

260 Frida Hastrup. *Weathering the World. Recovery in the Wake of the Tsunami in a Tamil Fishing Village*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 4.

zone between two deaths, rather than between life and death.”^{261,262} Kwon does not easily dismiss the undead dead—the dead for whom a symbolic regeneration of life has not been possible—as bad spirits. Rather, he argues that these displaced spirits create a new culture. Is there such a dynamic in Rapa Nui?

Leonardo Pakarati once told me that:

For the film, the 1994 Hollywood film about the Rapa Nui shot in the island, my father was one of the sculptors of *moai* made out of a metallic structure covered by plastic foam that the movie production needed. When they finished sculpting the first large one, my father with other elders started to sing; they sang and cried for the *moai*. Do you actually think that that *moai* has less *mana* in that moment than the ancient *moai* of stone: no!²⁶³

Leo’s commentary stunned me. As I confessed above in relation to the way Eddie presented the concept of *varua* to me, my tendency was to downplay such confluences of modern and traditional thought. I do not mean to romanticize these confluences. In many ways a foam *moai* is indeed auratically different than an ancient one made in the context of ritual. Yet this receptive rather than dismissive relation with the uncanny—the double of the ancestral in the modern—opens up a whole new line of inquiry. In what mode can relations with the uncanny object be regenerated? Based on my fieldwork, I define two such modes: smoke and art.

Throughout the Company years, *varua* presumably continued to live on the abandoned landscape and witnessed its transformation. However, not being fed by the living for years, often *varua* became more hostile and in any case more hermitic toward humans. One of the modes of regenerating relations with *varua*, as emplaced persons, is to feed them smoke. Whenever an earth oven is built and used on the island, it is extremely important to leave some of the food burning for the *varua*’s nourishment. People who do not follow this norm are purported to be the victims of unfortunate events. As a person returns to a place periodically and feeds the *varua* of the place, the place becomes more inhabitable and events become more propitious. The Rapanui, I contend, are slowly re-inhabiting their world by the making of fire:

We arrive to the fire, that is the last *mana* that we the Polynesians have over Earth today, universally the fire. Ancestrally here people would do an earth oven [*umu*] and there was an *atua ivi* [priest], whose function was the fire, he has the magical word to get the heat out of the fire, and he can transfer this heat to other things. He understands fire and fire stops resisting with its physical force... He can then give this power to *ti* [endemic plant] and ask the *ariki* [chief] or ask a mountain, a river, ocean, to bring all of the strength to the *ti*, which is planted specially for this occasion... The *ivi atua* prepares himself for months, he is *tapu*, and during the ceremony the place is *tapu*... For me the strongest place to call for strength is *Terevaka* [a hill]: why? Because there is where the *moai* were carved, where all clans worked, where there is most of the *atua* [deity] from Hiva. But two centuries ago the light from the fire was shut off. The island has lost its *mana*, the fire. I would like to ask for my Polynesian brothers to come give

261 Heonik Kwon. *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*. Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge University Press, 2013 [2004].

262 Veena Das. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 49.

263 Leonardo Pakarati. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

us the light again. I think I have the capacity to be the *ivi atua*, I have that *mana*; that is what an *ivi atua* in Raiatea [another island] told me.²⁶⁴

Petero insisted to me that regardless of the length of time during which one leaves home, upon return the *varua* are still there and still recognize the self. Kiri Ika ratified this by telling me that, “the *varua* are there, just like *mana*; it is a matter of the people seeing it and interacting with it, but they are there,”²⁶⁵ a point also made by Riro Riroroko, Sorobabel Fati, and Isabel Pakarati.

Fire and more precisely smoke plays a key role as regenerator, as an energy currency. In his study of the Haya lived world, Brad Weiss makes a similar point:

The fire is a place of incorporation and transformation... By being burned, the efficacy of... weeds can be expanded from a singly spot... to a much wider region. The effects of fire and burning, then, are to make connections with spatial regions... Through its transformative potential, fire can literally *fill* space.²⁶⁶

One of the problems with the use of smoke for regenerating connections to the dividual lifeworld, as Piru Huke told me, is that now the island is full of trash from tourists, and therefore the *varua* feed off toxic smoke. Despite the noxious environment, however, Piru insisted that *varua* are quite capable of adapting to changing circumstances. She once told me, even, that *varua* are known to go to the local discotheque (*Toroko*) and like to dance and get drunk.²⁶⁷ Another problem involves the demographics of *varua*. At the beginning of my research, I was under the impression that most *varua* exist in the countryside, rather than Hanga Roa. McCall seemed to support this assumption stating that, “many Rapanui believe that the safest place on the island is... Hanga Roa... Because several different groups have lived in the area for some time, there are no conflicting spirits.”²⁶⁸ This assumption, however, was wrong. As Valeska Chavez put it, “here in town there are *varua*; what happens is that they become accustomed to modernity as well. The countryside is more ‘virgin,’ so it is easier to detect them; that is all.”²⁶⁹ Thus, modern conditions of life are not a necessary impediment to the regeneration of connections with the dividual lifeworld.

An interesting point about *varua* in the contemporary is that what may have changed is not any essence the *varua* may have had (the concept of essence does not fit well with that of *varua*), but the mode *varua* have to relate to the living. Mihaera Paté, for instance, insists that “before the *varua* were right there, always there in the everyday to speak to you. Now *varua* are scared and show up sometimes only... where they know they can play with you.”²⁷⁰ Piru Huke made a similar point when she revealed that “the idea is to leave them alone. The idea is not to call on them... For they are part of us.”²⁷¹ Hapa Tepano held this same view: the *varua* manifest themselves on the body “only when the person has forgotten him or her.”²⁷² Hapa proceeded to

264 Petero Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

265 Kiri Ika. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

266 Brad Weiss. *The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World: Consumption, Commoditization, and Everyday Practice*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 48-9.

267 Piru Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

268 Grant McCall. *Las Fundaciones de Rapanui*. (Easter Island, Chile: Museo Provincial R.P. Sebastian Englert, 1986), 103-104.

269 Valeska Chavez. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

270 Mihaera Paté. Easter Island, Chile, 2012. Recorded interview by Jacinta Arthur.

271 Piru Huke. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Unrecorded interview by Pablo Seward.

272 Hapa Tepano. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

tell me that if you feed the *varua* everyday, as a matter of habit, they express themselves in you through bodily affect, which then moves you to continue feeding them in the same fashion. Relations with *varua* are about belonging, which is precisely what the uncanny interrupts. To regenerate connections with the dividual lifeworld by feeding smoke to *varua* means to bring the relational presence of *varua* back to the everyday.

This habitual, everyday practice is signified by the word *umaŋa*, from *umu* (food) and *aŋa* (work). According to Piru Huke, *umaŋa* began with fishermen, whom would leave fish for the *tupuna* [ancestors] in return of the *tupuna*'s help with daily chores. *Umaŋa* thus refers to the traditional Rapanui mode of labor, in which kin—including kin distant in time—share labor for food. The system follows the logic of Bronislaw Malinowski's and Marcel Mauss' famous descriptions of gift exchange systems, whereby gifts engender debt, which in turn creates a reciprocity cycle. If you feed other-than-human persons, they will help you. As Tongariki Tuki pointed out, *umaŋa* essentially binds the community together, as you have to remember who you owe work to. Intimately tied to the practice of feeding *varua*, *umaŋa* according to Riro Riroroko, “just happened...you did not have to ask people for it; they just knew when it was their turn, and you just knew when it was yours.” Today, according to Riro, *umaŋa* does exist, but only in very special occasions.²⁷³ The regeneration of the dividual lifeworld was framed in many occasions as the regeneration of *umaŋa*, of everyday communal practice. By allowing the re-inhabitation of a place and the subsequent synergy of human labor with that of the emplaced persons of the place, smoke functions as a place-making tool and is therefore key to recovery.

A different question is how to create new modes of regeneration. The use of the creative power of art, both ancient Rapanui and modern forms of art, as another mode of regeneration is evident in my fieldwork. As Michael Taussig argues, “the space of death is preeminently a space of transformation.”²⁷⁴ In what follows I explore the art and future art of Rapanui artist Te Pou Huke. Artwork, he believes, opens up a new space of dialogue with emplaced persons. As Gell argues, “social agency can be exercised relative to things and social agency can be exercised by things.”²⁷⁵ Works of art for Gell, therefore, must be treated as “person-like; that is, sources of, and targets for, social agency.”²⁷⁶ This is precisely what Te Pou does.

One day Te Pou invited me to the derelict house in which he was raised. The house is structurally Western, a testament to an invaded domestic sphere, a rectangle made of cement, with a triangular tin roof. Te Pou remembers the house as a place of decadence, with rampant alcoholism. Throughout his childhood, however, Te Pou made a place of the house, which is now covered with Rapanui art and in fact was the most intimately Rapanui place I visited on the island.

273 Riro Riroroko. Easter Island, Chile, 2013. Recorded interview by Pablo Seward.

274 Michael Taussig. “Culture of Terror, Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture.” In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984), 495.

275 Alfred Gell. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16.

276 *Ibid.*, 96.



Figure 10. Te Pou Huke's home. The photo does not do justice to the visual appeal of the house. Photo taken by Pablo Seward, January 2014.

Te Pou's first activity every morning is to go to what he calls his "corner," a space around the fire pit of this house, where a petroglyph he carved some time ago embodies his ancestors and gathers them in this space. He talks to his *koro* and *nua*, by which he means both his specific forefathers and the forefathers of all Rapanui. As I explain further in the Conclusion, the 2014-2015 collaborative project I am undertaking in the island involves making Te Pou's home and the surrounding property into a live museum, a microcosm of how the island could be on the basis of what it was. The project stems from Te Pou's belief that the house is already imbued in much *mana*, given all the traces of his life and of his experience that it harbors in the form of art, and therefore may serve as a creative foci. The inside walls of the house are covered with hundreds of separate wall art pieces by Te Pou, each of which speaks to the material agency of his historical person, with which his progeny may dialogue in the future.



Figure 11. The inside walls of Te Pou Huke's home. Each image has deep Rapanui cultural value. Photo taken by Pablo Seward, January 2014.

Each of the images above has deep cultural significance to the Rapanui. Some of them correspond to specific petroglyphs on the island, others embody cultural symbols like the sacred chicken, and yet others, ancestors Te Pou could pinpoint in a genealogy.

In interpreting this place-making aspect of Te Pou Huke’s art practice, I draw from Pandolfo’s work with a mad artist in Morocco. M., as Pandolfo calls him, suffers from psychotic fugues and paints frescos when he returns from such melancholic and suicidal fugues. Thus his art involves images “which [come] from him, but [are not] him because he wasn’t there: it composed itself,” during his fugue. He takes weeks to recognize the image. The image seems therefore to be a kind of cathartic encounter with madness that allows the artist’s “life in the margins” to continue, that captures the man’s demons and localizes them in a fathomable form.²⁷⁷ From what I know Te Pou does not use art in the exact same way as M. does. Like M., however, Te Pou sees his artwork as a localized agency, to which he can relate at times, and to which his progeny may relate at others.

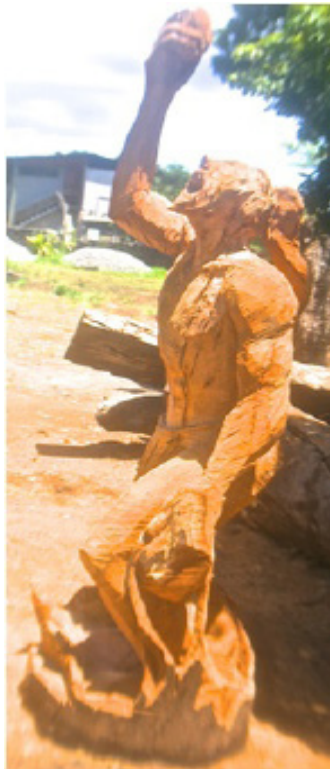


Figure 12. “The Slave,” a sculpture made by Te Pou Huke. Photo by Pablo Seward, January 2014.

Te Pou is an eclectic artist; other than wall art, he is skilled in painting, comic art, and sculpting. Sculptures are particularly important for Te Pou because their materiality gives them the potential to become new landscape features that may directly regenerate connections with the dividual lifeworld. One of Te Pou’s future projects is to transport and install sculptures in places where key events of the past happened. The sculptures will embody the persons involved, and therefore serve as abode for the continuing localized agency of these persons in these places.

The sculpture photographed above Te Pou titled “the slave.” It depicts a victorious competitor of the birdman cult triumphantly raising the sacred sooty-tern egg he has recently

²⁷⁷ Stefania Pandolfo. Conference Proceedings. Notes by Susan Miller. Critical Psychiatry Conference (Panel IV). Friday, May 17, 2013.

beaten other men to obtain. A detail of the sculpture is that the man's left hand is chained. Te Pou intends to place this sculpture where tour guides may tell romantic stories about the birdman cult in order to destabilize imposed views of the past in Rapa Nui as a Rousseauan, noble, idyllic past. Te Pou is well aware of the potential this mode of art practice has to intervene in the island's unresolved colonial history, as a way to capture the persons and histories of colonial events and come to terms with them.

Other than wood carving, Te Pou is able to use his art practice for activist goals through exhibitions to local people. In collaboration with a local hotel, at the time of my fieldwork Te Pou was planning a controversial exhibition of his recent paintings. I illustrate the controversial nature of this exhibition by an analysis of the following painting.



Figure 13. An acrylic painting by Te Pou Huke. Photo taken by Pablo Seward, January 2014.

The painting above depicts a specific historical event (the theft of *moai Hakananai'a* by a British ship in 1868) known to all Rapanui. In the painting the event is being witnessed by certain recognizable Rapanui historical figures (Juan Tepano and Veriamo Uri). But the artwork's purpose is not simply to depict the event. The fact that Veriamo is tattooing Juan Tepano and that this tattoo is bleeding adds a complex symbolic, rather than merely representational order to the painting. Veriamo is in the painful process of recording this tragic event on Tepano's skin as Tepano, impotent, stares to the side. The painting thus not only brings the Rapanui back to a key moment in their history, but also suggests a reflection and an attitude to the historical event. *Moai Hoahakananai'a* was probably one of the last if not the last *moai* to be built, with complex carvings on its back indicating the dawn of a new era. By showing such prominent leaders of Rapanui culture engaged in such a symbolic act, the painting suggests a certain way of reading this event. "The event is a scar in our social flesh," the painting seems to be saying, "a scar suffered by our ancestors, but a scar we all still have."

To conclude this last chapter, I would like to refer back to the painting by Te Pou printed on the front cover of the thesis. The painting does much the same with a long series of events in modernity as the one described above does with the event of the theft of the Rapanui's heritage. The depth of the painting is a metonymy for historical time: the deeper parts of the painting stand for the farthest parts of history. The key figure of the painting is a Rapanui man with the

aspect of a tour guide holding a *rongorongo* tablet, smiling as to greet tourists. A Chilean police officer and a tourist kneel in front of the man, the first pointing his gun at the man, the second his camera. This depicts the conflicting way of domination the Rapanui have undergone throughout their modern history. The man is the foci of the painting, which has several dimensions. At the very back of the man’s path (an analogy to the Rapanui’s complex history) is an image suggesting the restoration of the island. Following this image, a tour taxi appears and then a medic, respectively suggesting the commoditization and subsequent biopoliticization of the island. Parallel to the man’s path is a violent scene where a diabolic figure (perhaps the arrival of leprosy, or missionization) is seen crashing against the island’s landscape. Following this crash, another crash is evident: of a LAN Chile plane against a *moai*, which stares at the viewer grimacing. The plane carries a pile of garbage bags into the island. A rat carrying a suitcase is shown jumping out of the plane (suggesting the problem with Chilean immigration in Rapa Nui). Beyond the plane, a ship extracting all of the Rapanui’s marine resources is also shown.

The picture synthesizes Rapanui modern history in a grand collage of disparate images. Like Klee’s famous *Angelus Novus*, an object of much humanistic analysis, the painting is able to capture a complex history without reducing this history to an unequivocal interpretation. It suggests a lack of control, a lack of agency. However, in insinuating this, the painting proposes a certain historical consciousness through which the Rapanui are encouraged to remake their broken history. The main figure may strike the Rapanui as uncanny: a Rapanui man dressed in Western clothes. Though this is the main figure of the Rapanui’s contemporary history, all Rapanui intimately know where the man comes from today (through direct or vicarious experience). The future is uncertain but dangerous; all that is shown is the policeman aiming his gun at the man. Yet, the man walks confidently and with a smile.

How to actually remake the lifeworld, a question of the future, may be framed and approached by an academic text like I have throughout. The question, however, is ultimately one of action. It came from the field, but I can only return to the field to answer it.

IV. CONCLUSION

Umaña Tupuna

Instead of ending this thesis with a summary of each of the points that I made (which can be found in the abstract), I finish with a summary of the social impact project I am conducting in Easter Island on the basis of the knowledge gathered in the thesis.

My greatest challenge in the process of researching and writing this thesis was ethical. I was met in Rapanui in the light of a long history of anthropologists who have stolen material and immaterial culture—from the British Museum’s theft of *moai Hakananai’a* to Jared Diamond’s theft of the Rapanui’s voice in his latest book, *Collapse*.²⁷⁸ I used the knowledge I obtained through this thesis to envision a project to be implemented in Easter Island with the collaboration of the Rapanui. I was recently awarded the Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize to fulfill this project (September 2014 – April 2015).

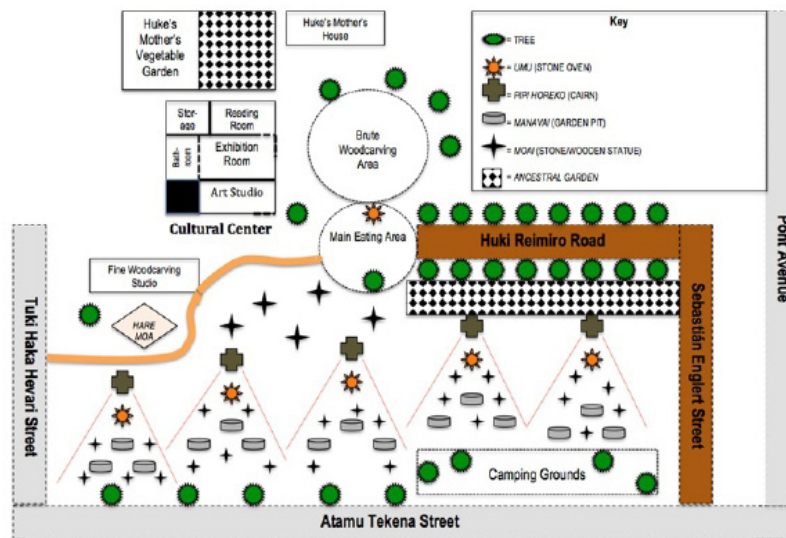
I propose to work with the Rapanui to create a performance space where Rapanui people may remember, materialize, and reclaim their dispossessed past. As a result, they may come

²⁷⁸ Jared Diamond. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York: Penguin Books (revised edition), 2011.

to understand their culture as a dynamic tradition, rather than as a living fossil. Major efforts of cultural revival—spanning sports, folklore, woodcarving, and tattooing—have emerged with the onset of tourism.^{279,280} But other than during the yearly *Tapati* Festival, these efforts remain unconsolidated.²⁸¹ As a case in point, in 2001 there were as many as twenty-four community and cultural groups, an excessive number considering the small population.²⁸² My project aims to bring these efforts together, and to do so in a symbolic space. This is not a new idea. For example, the Inuit of Northern Quebec built the Saputik Museum over a river, a “weir in the river of time,” where artifacts originally dispersed throughout the community were brought together for collective remembrance.²⁸³ Other similar efforts have emerged in the rest of Oceania, most prominently the *kura kaupapa Maori* movement in New Zealand, but none in Rapa Nui.

My project has four concrete goals. The first is to actually build the space through *umana*. I will provide the food for daily *umana* reunions. The second is to make the central house on Huke’s property into a live museum where the community can gather, materialize, and ultimately embody their memoryscape. The third is to develop initiatives that may enable the Rapanui to reconnect with and to begin to reclaim the entirety of their island as memoryscape by means of excursions around the island. My final goal is to create means by which the Rapanui may join other Pacific people in their recent articulation of Oceania as a “sea of islands” (rather than “islands in the sea”).²⁸⁴ The loss of *mana* signifies the rupture of a shared world. Moreover, it is this shared world that my project aims to provide a space for.

My final statement is not in words, but in an image. This image corresponds to the plan of the space I aim to open in collaboration with Te Pou Huke to help the Rapanui regenerate their connections with their dividual lifeworld.



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This is an abridged version of the anthropology honors thesis I wrote as an undergraduate (2014). For the full version please refer to the Kroeber Library at UC Berkeley.

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