The Water to Which We Belong:

Aqua Nullius and Frames of Wara in a Black Oceania

by

Nathan Rew

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates the ontological and epistemological barriers modernity presents to the prospect of a new Oceania. Anchoring itself in the work of Epeli Hau'ofa it blends critical theory from the radical Black, Oceanian, French, and Indigenous traditions together to demonstrate the persistence of two structural logics of modernity – aqua nullius and white supremacy. It argues that these logics structurally inhibit the possibility of a new Oceania. Simultaneously, it examines the material reality of these logics through an account of the state of water and Black existence in Oceania under modernity's colonial-capitalist world system. Recognising that these logics and their consequences are necessary to the functioning of modernity, it asserts that Hau'ofa's call to a new Oceania has embedded within it a call to end the world of modernity, of colonial-capitalism, a call to move towards a new world, a truly new Oceania.

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Contents

Preface

In its most straightforward iteration, this thesis is concerned with the question of what it might take under modernity to move towards Hau'ofa's (2008) notion of a new Oceania. What it might take to enact new ways of collectively understanding ourselves as the peoples that inhabit the Pacific Ocean, the peoples of Oceania. Critical to this, are the distinctions this thesis draws between 'the Pacific', 'Oceania', and 'a new Oceania.' The Pacific thus refers to the current, general understanding of the Pacific Islands held by the majority of the world. Oceania is used to signal to the historical and present moments of collective Pacific actions and relationalities, our reality as always connected. And lastly, a New Oceania is appealed to as a particular form of collective regional relationality, a future goal, or imagined collective identity that will help Oceania navigate the struggles ahead. It is this last form, a new Oceania, that this thesis is primarily invested in, asking what it takes to move towards a new Oceania, and what are the barriers it is encountering.

To do this, this thesis examines how the modern world imposes boundaries on the ontological, cosmological, epistemological, and axiological relationships to water and Black life, enforcing modernity's relationships to water and Black being as sites of ontological negation (Wilson, 2008). Navigating the ontological conditions of water and Black being, this thesis appeals to the cosmological guide of the Morning Star |Oa Malara|Venus|Koreri to structure its analysis. This thesis is thus organised across three different relationships to the celestial phenomenon known as the 'Morning Star'– the appearance of a bright star which precedes the rising of the sun, signalling the dawning of a new day. These three relationships, enacted through knowing Morning Star as Oa Malara, knowing Morning Star as Venus, and knowing Morning Star as Koreri, represent the three interwoven and conflicting conceptualisations of the world which this thesis has navigated in its analysis of two questions: first, what is the nature of the ontological and epistemological relationships between Black life and water in Oceania; second, what does this relationship tells us about some of the necessary conditions for a new Oceania?

Through relationship to cosmos, the motif of the 'Morning Star' structures and partitions this thesis in a similar manner to Tiffany King's framework of shoaling. King's navigation of Native/Indigenous and Black studies appeals to shoals as "analytical, theoretical, and methodological sandbars," sites in which the underlying humanist logics of colonial-

capitalism and "certain tendencies within Indigenous/Native studies (and Black studies) that align with White humanist thought" are contested and placed "under stress." (King, 2019, p.10). Consequently, each iteration of Morning Star identifies and facilitates a shifting in analytical focus, marking a framework and logic of colonial-capitalism that comes into relation with the question of a new Oceania, inviting the need to engage in the struggle for a new world.

In doing so this thesis adopts the frameworks of Hau'ofa (2008) and his analyses around a new Oceania, situating itself within a tradition of Oceanic theory and praxis which rejects modernity and the logics of colonial-capitalism. This thesis' contribution to this tradition takes the form of a substantiation of Hau'ofa's (2008) project through an identification of two onto-epistemic logics that act as barriers to the realisation of a possible new Oceania. These being aqua nullius; the denial of water's possibility as a site of being, and white supremacy; the denial of Black Oceanian being. As a world-system established on these two onto-epistemic orders, this thesis argues that colonial-capitalism is incompatible with the prospect of a new Oceania. Given the fundamental importance of relationship to the Pacific Ocean and Black liberation for the Pacific, the prospect of a new Oceania is opposed from the outset to logics of aqua nullius and white supremacy. Aqua nullius thus defines a type of water relationality which Oceania is not. Where Aqua nullius is opposed to Oceania, and Oceanian water relationalities. Opposed to Oceania's recognition of the ocean itself as a world, a site of being which links our struggles, rather than divides us. Oceania is thus called to overcome aqua nullius and aqua nullius' frameworks. Further as a decolonial project, committed to liberation and the navigation of differences, to the radical reordering of and end of the world, Oceania is called to challenge and overcome the violences of white supremacy and Indonesian occupation in West Papua. Oceania is called to stand for the liberation of all its people, of all its differences. Thus, given that colonial-capitalism is established on white supremacist notions of enlightenment humanism and separability, that it is established on the occupation of West Papua, it becomes clear that colonial-capitalism is irreconcilable with any project or movement towards a new Oceania.

This analysis first presents an account of my positionality as the author of this thesis; as an Indigenous Pacific activist and academic who sees in the idea of a new Oceania, one of the only paths forward in which we as the collective peoples of the Pacific can secure a healthy future for our peoples, our lands, and our waters. I explicitly differentiate between the Pacific

of today structured by legacies of aqua nullius and white supremacy which violently divide it against itself, and a new Oceania. A new Oceania which is anchored in relations which are incompatible any system grounded in aqua nullius and white supremacy. I thus demonstrate how the struggle for a new Oceania has come to shape my activism and teaching, providing an explanation of how and why, this thesis came to be, as well as an exposition of the theoretical traditions which inform and frame my approach. I further assert that often, contemporary appeals to the notion of Oceania to collective Pacific relationalities within the world of colonial-capitalism, are limited and sometimes even false appeals to Oceania. This being grounded in the realisation that the Oceania which colonial-capitalism and its proponents suggest exists today, is one which explicitly excludes Black Oceania and the West Papuan struggle for liberation. A new Oceania is more than diplomatic alliances to protect the interests of colonial-capitalism, more than the legacies of white supremacy which function to continually deny agency and justice to West Papua. It is a new world, a completely new order of relations. Ultimately, a new Oceania means the restoration and resurgence of Indigenous Oceanian water relationalities, the liberation of West Papua. At the same time, it adopts the Rancierian frameworks of politics and police to demonstrate how modernity prevents this, wielding law, and diplomacy to reinforce aqua nullius and white supremacy.

Anchoring itself in cosmological relationalities and taking its lead from the stars and our different relationships to them, this thesis examines first my relationships to water and Blackness under the visage of 'Morning Star' as Oa Malara, as my ancestral guides present through my connection to the beaches of Iokea, to Papua New Guinea and as the star to which we return. Oa Malara, as my guide, as a marker of myself as author, has come to symbolise the underlying theories and relationships which inform this thesis. The ideas which underpin its analysis. In his articulation of the core tenets of an Indigenous research methodology, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) notes that one of the most important of these is relationality and the need to be in good relation. He identifies four types of relationality, relationship with people, relationship to environment/land, relationship to cosmos, and relationship to ideas, as being core part of Indigenous practice. These relationalities are the very nature of Indigenous ontological and epistemological frameworks, constituting the ways in which our ancestors have preserved their traditions and survived the violences of colonialism. To navigate cosmological, interpersonal, environmental, and

theoretical accountabilities and the nature of one's relation to these spheres, a constant reflection on one's positionality is critical.

As a thesis grounded in trying to recognise and navigate Indigenous relationalities, an appeal to Oa Malara and my ancestors, allows me to articulate myself and my relationships in this project, to provide an account of who I am, and how I have come to be writing this piece. My relations to the cosmological figure of Morning Star, providing a framework for navigating the interwoven relations with environment, people, and ideas (Wilson, 2008). It is an account of the relations which have come to influence this project. It is an exposition of the ontological, methodological, epistemological, and axiological frameworks which structure and inform this thesis. Through an appeal to Oa Malara, I hope to be able to account for the people, places, and relationships whose lessons underpin my actions, presenting a moment for me to be honest about the biases and beliefs which have transformed this journey. It opens up this thesis through ceremony by presenting a space for me to be explicit about the encounters and struggles which have shaped my life, my way of thinking and engaging with the world. Oa Malara's presence also opens the possibility of dreaming and imagining, giving me space and time to examine both the limitations and restrictions which have been necessary to set around this thesis, but also my goals and hopes for this thesis; what I hope it can contribute to the struggle for liberation across Oceania. Lastly, it allows me to be intentional in establishing a structure, a motif, and a pattern, providing a marker or frame we can identify and return to.

Through Venus, 'Morning Star' has come to represent the relationships of colonial-capitalist domination to water in Oceania. As Venus, 'Morning Star' allows me to examine the ontological and epistemological rationales which have, and continue to structure modernity's relationships to water. In its framing as Venus, Morning Star is linked to Oceania through the figure of Captain James Cook and his first venture into Oceania to observe the 1769 transit of Venus and then to survey the islands of the Pacific Ocean for colonisation by the British Navy. Cook and his relationship to Morning Star serve as steppingstones into an analysis of the colonial-capitalist logics which drove the British Navy to utilise a scientific venture to obscure their more nefarious and colonial intentions in the Pacific Ocean. This way of relating to Morning Star opens an archaeology of the Doctrine of Discovery and the legal structures, operations, and forms of power through which colonial and imperial states seemingly derived their right to colonise not only the lands and islands of Oceania, but

through an implicit operation of aqua nullius, the oceans, and waters from which we as the peoples of Oceania descend. Under Venus this thesis explores the fundamental relationship to saltwater which characterises colonial-capitalism. This is done precisely to demonstrate that the colonial-capitalist relationship to water is necessarily antithetical to the prospect of a collective Oceania.

Venus first pulls us into an analysis of the Doctrine of Discovery, the authoritative basis by which colonial nations articulated their right to engage in colonisation, demonstrating that the particularities of international maritime law and the economic requirements of early capitalist European powers required the ocean to operate as an extra-legal space, a space ultimately outside of the expressions of dominium, and imperium. Secondly, through Venus a material account of the state of water in Oceania and globally is presented, demonstrating both the dire state of our current context, but also the forms of resistance which tear at the fabric of power wielded by historic and contemporary colonial states. This section turns to draw out the ontological implications of this exclusion of the ocean and what it means for Oceania, where the ocean constitutes a site of being, a 'world' itself, which is then denied from the outset. A site which is negated in the very act of delineating the nation-state through the logics of colonisation and capitalism. With Venus it becomes clear that water, and in particular, the ocean, is denied its potential as a site of being or world in which we are immersed. In this respect, Hau'ofa (2008) examines the potential for Oceanian metaphor and philosophy in facilitating the development of a collective or regional Oceanian identity. This thesis further identifies the embedded logic of aqua nullius as an implicit colonial-capitalist logic which renders its world ontologically and epistemologically incapable of reconciling with Oceanian relationships to water. Through its violent means of relating to water colonial-capitalism denies Oceania its ontological possibility, its reality as a site of Being. If the Pacific is to move towards a new Oceania then, we must acknowledge that this can only be done by moving beyond this world, beyond the logics which establish the colonial-capitalist relation to Morning Star as Venus.

In the third section, Koreri, this thesis explores a way of relating to the Morning Star as Koreri, as the 'Morning Star' under which the West Papuan struggle for liberation operates. Through the story of Koreri and their significance as a symbol for liberation, and a new world to come, this relationship to Morning Star guides this conversation concerning the question of Black liberation and the Black ontological condition in Oceania. Under Koreri, I

present an account of what I have come to term Black Oceania. Where Koreri symbolises a critical resistance to white supremacy and the logics of colonial-capitalism which have imposed racialised hierarchies to deny the humanity and ontological possibility of Black existence. In distinguishing Black Oceania from Oceania in general and drawing attention to the conditions of Oceania's Indigenous Black existence, Koreri proposes another complication to Hau'ofa's search for a 'New Oceania' by interrogating the consequences of assimilated white supremacy and colonial-capitalist logics in dividing Oceania from itself. Koreri explores the interactions between Indigenous notions of relational ontologies, the radical Black tradition, and its applications in Oceania. Drawing on the lessons of the négritude, afro-pessimist and black nihilist movements and responses to the structures of ontological terror, and death, Koreri recognises the need to fundamentally struggle for a new world to liberate Black being.

Koreri has embedded within it, a recognition of the need to build on Hau'ofa's examination of Oceania by distinguishing between Oceania in general and Black Oceania to examine the legacies of white supremacy in Oceania. This being done to differentiate and name the reality of differences in ontological and epistemological possibilities under colonial-capitalism. Examining both the historical and contemporary legacies of the Oceanian and West Papuan slave trade, and the West Papuan fight for freedom from Indonesian occupation examples of the degree to which Black existence is denied and oppressed under colonial-capitalism, this section explores the consequences of ontological denial for both the colonised, and, through Césaire (2000), the colonisers. Moreover, these atrocities represent the potential reality all Black existence in Oceania is faced with today, the threat of social death, of being disregarded and denied the possibility of speech, life, and agency. It becomes clear through Koreri that the West Papuan struggle for liberation represents a critical instance in which the white supremacist logics of colonial-capitalism are, by their very nature, opposed to the prospect of a new Oceania.

Taken together these layered understandings of Morning Star, in presenting two critical inconsistencies between colonial-capitalist and Oceanic relationships to water and Black being, demonstrate that the epistemological and ontological divide between these two worlds is one that is irreconcilable. The contested relationships to water and Black being in Oceania present a difference between the relationships which have naturally grown from these waters and lands; their continued persistence and imposition is one grounded in

genocide and destruction of Oceanic environment and people. However, rather than being in direct conflict, as Rancière (1999) demonstrates, the question of politics is not one of conflicting parties, but of the denial of the possibility of contestation, where acts of contestation are precluded or reduced from the outset to expressions of phonê (animalistic emotional expression), rather than logos (speech). Thus, the ocean is suspended in an extrajudicial state, either subject to imperium and the wielding of explicit violence in asserting a limited control over it, or explicit logics of capital by affirming it as commons. Denied from the outset, is the possibility of Oceanic relationship to water as a site or realm of being. Under colonial-capitalism there is no 'proper' mechanism available through which the Indigenous Oceanian relationships to water, that is, relating to the ocean as a primordial entity in the world to which we belong, from which we descend can be understood. Under modernity, Indigenous Oceanian assertions of a disagreement, of contestation over the colonial-capitalist relation to water, are ignored and denied from the outset, reduced to animalistic cries of emotion as opposed to speech, genuine concern, or dispute. Politics, then, concerns the forcing of one side, the uncounted, to be heard, to count. In this, the assumption of aqua nullius serves to discount the prospect of disagreement and dissension through essentialising colonial-capitalism's relation to water.

For Black existence, as Fanon (1963), Césaire (2000), and the Black nihilist and afro-pessimist tradition demonstrate, the white world is founded on the ontological negation of Black existence, through the violent act of dehumanisation which renders Black existence only visible to the world through its death, only palatable in its ability to assimilate into whiteness. I examine then, how the ontological condition of West Papuan life, wherein the rest of the world only interprets West Papua through its death, is drawn out of the same white supremacist logics which operate to suppress Black existence globally. In this, I hope to reach across oceans, reiterating the links between Black struggles for liberation through their common enemy: white supremacy. West Papua is a site of resistance and struggle, of conflicting worlds, where the West Papuan dream of a united sovereign people tears at the fabric of violence and power maintained by Indonesia. It is also, as Swan (2022) demonstrates, a struggle for freedom inextricably linked to the global and pan-African struggles for Black liberation. In recognising these irreconcilable tensions, this thesis concludes by exploring what this means for the struggle for a new Oceania, how these tensions can inform and develop our understanding, providing us with frameworks for

rehabilitating our relationships to Water and Blackness. Drawing on the Indigenous traditions of Oceania, and Hau'ofa's (2008) determination of the importance of reconstructing narratives of hope, and linking this to the négritude movement, this thesis concludes by asking not only what narratives and realities we must do away with in striving towards a new Oceania, but also what must we build along the way. This thesis finishes with a final thought on some of the necessary realities we must face to step into this future as Indigenous and collective guardians of the oceans, of a new Oceania and what this means for our struggle today.

This thesis thus aims to demonstrate that the modern world of colonial-capitalism is ontologically and epistemologically irreconcilable with the prospect of a new Oceania. It does this through an analysis of two sites of onto-epistemic opposition between modernity and what I argue are the necessary conditions for a new Oceania. These two colonial-capitalist relations, wherein water is denied its capacity as a site or world of being via aqua nullius and Black Oceanian existence is denied via white supremacy, establish the need for a militant rejection of modernity across the Pacific. At the same time, drawing on Black Feminist and Oceanian theory, this thesis recognises that this rejection also demands reinvigorated Oceanian aesthetics and narratives which imagine and build the types of relationalities critical to Oceania's survival over the coming century. To build a future beyond modernity, in which Oceania can truly come into itself, as a collective means of organising ourselves, we must balance the militant rejection of modernity with an aesthetics and an emphasis of collective Oceanian relationalities. These relationalities are called forth to invoke new and old ways of understanding ourselves, to foster hope for a world beyond ours, a world in which a new Oceania can flourish.

Oa Malara

To move towards a new Oceania two sites of ontological negation, which must first be overcome, are examined in this thesis. First, the negation of water as the site of a possible world and way of relating, as a site of Being and potentiality. Second, the negation of the ontological existence of Black being in the colonial-capitalist world. Through these negations, the ancestral bonds which have historically bound our 'great Sea of Islands' together are increasingly strained and at risk of being severed as the immanent consequences of colonial-capitalism's logics become more and more apparent (Hau'ofa, 2008). Beginning the journey of putting this doctoral thesis together I was initially overwhelmed by the immensity, the complexity, and the interconnectedness of the nature of such a project. Both water and Black being and their respective histories with colonisation and capitalism in the Pacific are immense research areas in and of themselves, both worthy of investigation in their own right. However, this thesis holds them together, asserting that they are bound both through my own way of relating to the world, but also as paired sites of onto-epistemic negation in modernity's denial of a new Oceania. For me they are linked through my own relationality, my own way of engaging with the world as a diasporic son of Papua New Guinea and as someone whose life has been shaped by water relations.

These two sites are linked through the shared legacies of legal, cultural, political, and explicit violence which colonial-capitalism wields to impose its will on Oceania. This interrogation of water and Black being in Oceania has at times proved difficult to try and organise, to navigate, and I found myself facing more than a few false starts. What I encountered through my attempts to orientate and structure this analysis, however, was that while some of the difficulty lay in the interweaving of the complex and sometimes conflicting theoretical traditions which have come to inform this piece, the true difficulty lay in the simple vastness of such a topic, the vastness of water, the vastness of Black existence. In their vastness, I found myself at times drowning, immersed in the numerous ways in which I could approach and trace these ideas, I was at an impasse, uncertain with how I could start to order my analysis and argument. In this, it was through an off-chance call with my Bubu (Grandfather) that the form and structure of the thesis revealed itself, that I found a marker, a symbol, through which I could orientate myself.

Lost as I was then, I did the only thing I could think of and called my Bubu to ask for his guidance and see if there were any stories, songs, or myths around water from our village that he thought could be helpful in determining what I wanted to do with the thesis. I had initially been interested in collating stories, songs, and myths, exploring the different embedded forms of relating to water from my village as well as from around Oceania, trying to build and link an anthology of Oceanic theories, narratives, and histories relating to water. My Bubu instead introduced a cosmological relationality to the thesis, a framework through which I became able to orientate and make sense of my research, linking my analyses of Blackness and Water. Specifically, he explained to me that when embarking on a tough journey, when looking for help and support, our peoples would traditionally appeal to our ancestors, to Morning Star, to Oa Malara, for guidance and strength. In this wisdom, the pieces fell into place and the structure of this thesis was made clear. The three main sections of the thesis would each appeal to a particular shaping of cosmological relationality in their opening. These cosmological relationalities then would speak to contested interpretations of the world and its functions and demonstrate the particular logics of the world operating today to shape modernity's onto-epistemic opposition to Oceania.

The relationship between the ocean and the cosmos within Oceania is well established, as Hau'ofa (2008) reminds us, the worlds of Oceania were cosmologically immense, our navigators were often guided by stars, and our stories, and mythologies speak to these realities as our legends attest to. Further, as Wilson (2008) points out, relation to environment and cosmos are critical aspects of Indigenous relationality and research. Being in relation, however, is not always enough. We are in relation to all things always, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometime neutral, sometimes unknowingly. As Indigenous peoples, and particularly as the Indigenous peoples of Oceania, the importance of being in good relation with each other and with the ocean, is critical to our very way of being. Wilson (2008) identifies that key to being in good relation then, is a practice and code of relational accountability which underpins our behaviours. Relational accountability is developed in the forming and deepening of relationships. The nature of one's relation to a situation is not always explicit and clear though, and as such, this accountability is strengthened through the establishing of feedback mechanisms or ways of checking in. Throughout this thesis, the importance of being in good relation; with people, environments, cosmos, and ideas, is emphasised. In this, as the author I try to be open about the processes and the rationales

behind my decisions. I thus interweave accounts of myself, my experiences, and my biases, my story, throughout this thesis, offering a degree of candour and accountability in exploring the multiplicity of relationships which have contributed to this thesis. In doing so, I express the particular processes and relations which have directed this piece, naming them in the hopes of doing them justice.

Relational accountability then, has also come to guide a number of the decisions made while on this journey, where "gut-feeling" or lagona (lah-ngor-nah) (Sauni, 2014) became a means of navigating my relations and a key feedback mechanism in the development of this thesis. Its significance was particularly emphasised in my response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on my intentions for the thesis, particularly with borders closing. With still a keen interest in collating Oceanic stories around water, and attempting to navigate the new reality of COVID-19, I floated the idea of engaging in some of this research via Zoom interviews, and potentially video-calls to my village to my eldest sister, Simone. In her response, I found that Lagona guided my decisions, guided my feelings of relational accountability. Lagona, is the way in which we often navigate situations and encounters via 'gut-feeling' or, 'sixth sense,' in order to maintain good relation, and particularly operates in situations where other mechanisms might not be viable, such as during ceremony, or in the contemporary context for example, our relations are mediated through cameras and online tools. Lagona then, is the reliance on gut-feeling and intuition crucial to traversing and making sense of one's relationality (Sauni, 2014).

Thus, when I asked my sister whether moving the research online to Zoom and video-calls might be an option, and she kind of paused before she replied, in response to that pause, that hesitation, my gut told me that trying to do the thesis that way would not be right. That it would not maintain the relationality necessary for what I wanted to achieve, that I would not be as accountable not being in there in person and that the conversations would always be constricted in some way of form, not doing them the justice they deserved. In doing so, I would be putting the goals of the thesis and the institution before the necessary relationship and connections such knowledge requires before being shared. I decided then, that the thesis would have to adopt a different approach and goal, that the collating of these stories, the bringing together of Oceanic narratives around water and Black being would have to be a different project and that the focus would shift towards more explicitly defining the colonial-capitalist relationships to them. Thus, through the lessons of my Bubu around Morning Star

and its different possible relationalities, I found an anchor and a marker, a point to which I could return while navigating these different but intertwined realms to orientate myself.

In structuring the overall thesis, the three body sections have thus been divided according to these three different ways of relating to Morning Star; first as Oa Malara, second as Venus, and third Koreri. In this section, Oa Malara, I provide an account of myself as the author, my relations, and how they have guided this thesis. As my ancestor and spiritual guide, Oa Malara comes to represent me as the author and how I relate to the thesis, allowing me to introduce the processes and practices which have informed this investigation. It first allows me to provide an account of how and why this thesis came about, my intentionality entering into the process, and what I believe is potentially at stake in allowing colonial-capitalism to continue to define these relations. Oa Malara also explores the theoretical and philosophical systems which inform the arguments through this thesis. As a section, Oa Malara signifies, as well, a broader literature review and methodology, wherein the approaches, practices, and ceremonies which have facilitated the development of this thesis are articulated. Explicitly, it moves to an account of the theoretical foundations which I have drawn from to establish the central arguments of the thesis. Investigating the relationship between water and Blackness in Oceania under colonial-capitalism, this thesis finds itself at the intersections of four intellectual traditions, not necessarily separate, but, sufficiently distinguishable from each other as to warrant distinction going forth. These being the Oceanic, Black, Indigenous and French traditions of critical theory and radical critique. In this section then, I introduce the Indigenous and Indigenous Oceanic frameworks which anchor and inform this piece, incorporating the lessons of Hau'ofa (2008), Wendt (1976), Wilson (2008), and Coulthard (2014) to articulate the fundamentally pro-Indigenous Oceania, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial tenets of the thesis. This is grounded in my own reading of Hau'ofa's work and the struggle for a 'New Oceania' which emphasises a more radical legacy embedded within his collective attempts to articulate Oceania and its possibilities.

Out of this reading of a New Oceania, this section then moves to an account of the questions of ontology, agency, and the possibility of becoming a subject, or subjectivation, shifting through the work of Althusser (2006), and Rancière (2010) to explore the role of agency, chance, and action in reconfiguring one's ontological condition. In this, the nature and possibility of a struggle for a New Oceania is examined. This account of the question of ontology, however, is further complicated through an analysis of the hegemonic onto-

epistemic framings which have been established through colonialism and capitalism and which reduce Black existence to a subontological condition. I thus establish the theoretical basis for my account of water and the logics which structure colonial-capitalist relationship to it today. Rancière's (2010) recognition of the contingency and fluidity of historical narratives and police orders establishes the non-linear basis for the tracing of logics, and opens up the possibility of bringing together threads from an array of sources. Their historiographic and archival approaches allowing us to blend theory to draw out the implicit logics of *aqua nullius* and its role in maintaining capital, establishing the basis for the second section 'Venus.' However, to engage in this analysis and to enact the proper forms of relational accountability, some account of myself via an introduction and opening of this thesis, is necessary. I begin, as is customary in Aotearoa, with my pepeha – a traditional Māori account of the relations which shape who I am, tracing the journey of the waters which define me, and how this project came to be.

1. Anchoring Ceremonies

A Ceremony with Oa Malara

Kia ora,

Ko Tei te Maunga
Ko Miaru te Awa
Ko Wansolwara te Moana
Ko Iokea tōku Iwi
Ko Posa tōku Hapū
Ko Rew tōku Whanau
Nō Aotearoa, nō Papua Nukini hoki ahau
Kei Maraetai tōku kāinga,
Ko Nathan Rew tōku Ingoa

In opening this thesis, this space and time, I wanted to first provide a bit of context to the project itself, to give an account of why and how I became involved with writing about water and Blackness. In this respect I think some account of myself as a person, my history, will help establish a common ground, a foundation, for this thesis and provide some insight to the range of factors which influence it, and myself, as I write. As such, this opening account

takes the form of a laying bare of the historical conditions which have and continue to inform my relationship with water and Blackness, not so much an autoethnography as an account of how this project came to be. I start with a summary of how relationship to water and Blackness have shaped my journey and thus came to be the focus point of this thesis, before outlining the overarching research context and theory which generally underpins this thesis including its interlocutors, its structure, and its goals. This is done to anchor this thesis within Wilson's (2008) frameworks of relationality and relational accountability, and the axiomatic considerations of the importance of being in good relation. By providing some account of my relations and being open about their role in this piece I aim to demonstrate their primacy in anchoring and guiding this analysis. Further, this thesis interweaves Melanesian *tok stori* methodologies throughout its approach, emphasising the importance of relationality via an often-times more conversational tone and structure. It engages stories and experiences from my life which have shaped my approach as a theorist and thinker to help establish a common backdrop for why and how certain ideas and approaches have been applied (Sanga & Reynolds et al., 2018). This thesis thus expresses its relationality and relational accountability through its "commitment to togetherness manifest through engaging in *stori*, a shared narrative which dialogically constructs reality." (Sanga & Reynolds et al., p.8) In this respect, the interlocuters supposed throughout this thesis are the generations of Pacific activists to come, the artists, labourers, caregivers, and theorists, who dream of an Oceania which exists outside of the myriad institutions and structures of colonial-capitalist oppression. This thesis is written for the outcasts whose dreams are of an Oceania which has left the logics and structures of colonial-capitalism in our distant past. It is part of an unfolding story addressed to those of the Pacific who would, rather than 'lean-in' to these systems of violence and oppression, actively pursue their abolition, strive to bring about their end through militant resistance, and invite a new world into being.

For myself, a relationship to and with water in its many shifting forms has been central to my life from its conception. My father, Neil Rew, was a Pākehā man of European and Syrian descent, he grew up on the esplanade of Eastern Beach, in East Auckland. An avid fisherman and disciple of the ocean he spent his childhood catching eels, kahawai, snapper, and flounder, up and down the shores of the beach. From what my grandmother tells me, he would often disappear from school, turning up at home later that day with fish instead. He loved nothing better than to be out on the water, amongst the waves, catching fish. He was

good at it too, his passion, hard work, and good fortune, meant that he found himself chasing fish across Pacific Ocean from the Great Barrier Reef to Papua New Guinea, to Tonga. Traversing Oceania he sought Striped Marlin, Yellowfin Tuna, Sailfish, and Swordfish, encountered Great White, Tiger, and Mako Sharks, and weathered storms of all shapes and size all for the love of fishing and being out on the ocean. As a child, he transferred this passion to me and introduced me to this world when we would go fishing in the much calmer waters of the Hauraki Gulf in search of snapper or kahawai for dinner and he would regale me with these stories as we sat and waited for the fish to bite. It was during his time fishing and working in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, that he met my mother. My mother Ethel Rew was from the coastal village of Iokea, in the Kerema area of Gulf Province, and was raised in Taikone, Port Moresby, where she was studying and working when she met my father. A keen fisherwoman herself, she met my Dad at the Port Moresby yacht club where she was working, and they quickly fell in love. After having their first child, my sister Simone, they moved to the township of Rabaul, in East New Britain, New Britain Island, where my sister Christina was born. I was next, and the only one of my siblings born in New Zealand. My parents had left Rabaul in early 1994 but in March, while they were still in Auckland, I was born. In September of that year however, the volcanoes Tavurur and Vulcan on New Britain Island erupted covering everything in ash and destroying much of the town. With not much to return to in Rabaul after the eruption and potential work for my Dad in Tonga making itself available, my parents made the decision to move all of us to Nuku'alofa, Tonga. There they worked, fished, and raised us. Not too long after arriving in Tonga, my younger brothers, the twins, Timothy, and William were born.

We stayed in Tonga for a few years, but just before I turned five my Mum learnt she had cancer and we moved back to New Zealand, to Cockle Bay, Auckland, where my Dad's family could support us. When I was seven, my Mum lost her battle with breast cancer. After she passed away, we moved to Eastern Beach, to a house just a few spots down from my Dad's childhood home, right along the esplanade. Growing up on Eastern Beach my siblings and I learnt how to drag the net for sprats, surfcast for kahawai, spear flounder along the mudflats in the evenings, catch eels in the creeks, and set longlines with kites and kayaks. I was a quiet child, growing my relationship with the waters and content to spend most afternoons across the road at the beach surfcasting. Once a week or so, Dad and I would head out in our 12ft dinghy, motoring out and around the islands of the Hauraki Gulf in search of

snapper, kahawai, and occasionally, elusive kingfish. While we were out on the water, he showed me the importance of landmarks, of reading my surroundings, the landscape, to find the right spots. He taught me that the moon influenced our fishing, that the winds, the tides, all could be interpreted, understood, and harnessed to catch fish. My Dad however, passed away some five years after my Mum, a few months before my twelfth birthday and we were uprooted again. After moving around and staying with a number of different legal guardians, my siblings and I ended up settling in Maraetai Beach, overlooking the ocean, the wharf, and the wider Hauraki Gulf. In a spot where, on a clear day you can see the Coromandel Peninsula in the distance, and on some crisp mornings, even see the Barrier Islands.

While our time with our parents was short, one of the most important things they developed with my siblings and I from an early age was an appreciation and love for the ocean, for the unknown depths, for its wild and beautiful diversity. My parents' personal relationships and histories with the oceans and waters were foundational to their meeting, to the decisions they made as they raised us, and the gifts they imparted unto us before they left. They fostered in me from an early age a fundamental appreciation of the oceans and a recognition of their immense value. More than that though, they gifted to us a relationship with the oceans from our very first breath, an understanding of the Ocean as provider, as source of food and life. This close relationship with the oceans and water influenced my decision to take up rowing as a sport while at boarding school. Each summer I would spend my afternoons training out on the waters of the Tāmaki Estuary. It was there that I first began to witness and understand the consequences of our mistreating water. The contrast between the lakes and rivers we travelled to for regattas around Aotearoa, and the estuary we trained in could not have been more vivid. In hindsight, the Tāmaki Estuary was where I first learned that there was such thing as 'off' water, water where cuts meant infections. A result of industrialisation and sewage overflow as 'development' and 'progress' sacrificed its health.

Finishing college, I moved back home to Maraetai to live with my sisters, while attending university in Auckland. Throughout most of my time at university I have lived in Maraetai where the beach has served as a constant reminder of the importance of relationship with water, its shifting nature and health. Even my regular commute to the city is across the Hauraki Gulf, via the ferry, where on rare days throughout the year we are lucky enough to see dolphins and whales cruising along the coasts. In my undergraduate studies I majored in psychology and philosophy and had originally considered pursuing the clinical psychology

programme, I think because on some level I hoped my studies would help me make sense of the world and in doing so give me the tools to help others. However, as I became involved in student politics and protests, I found myself disillusioned with psychology as a subject and the clinical distance I felt it imposed between itself and its relationships to people. Instead, I turned to philosophy and critical theory as a means of understanding and making sense of the world and the struggles I saw unfolding around me. During this time, as student activists so often do, I found Marx's analyses of capital, theories of socialism, communism, and emancipation, the works of the Frankfurt School, conceptualisations of power and resistance, protest, and policing, ideology, and revolution; theories which sought to challenge and unravel the assumptions and logics that are imposed on our lives and shape our world views. I also encountered the antiracist and decolonial works of Black, brown, and Indigenous theorists who embodied legacies of Marx's critiques but pushed them further in their own contexts. Thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Kwame Ture who demonstrated the necessity of violence in the struggle against colonial-capitalism and provided frameworks and guidelines for enacting liberation against such an abhorrent and violently inhumane system.

At the same time, while diving into these theories, I was also aware of the limitations of philosophy as a subject and its Anglo-American and Eurocentric foundations, as well as the implicit and sometimes even explicit white supremacist tendencies which underpinned certain traditions. Engaging with philosophy then, I have often found myself in a position of walking between two worlds, as an academic and activist, but also as part of the working class Melanesian diaspora. This is first and foremost as I have always sought to translate and explore what I have been studying and learning with my siblings and family, experimenting with what does and does not work in making sense of our contexts – the economic, gendered, and racial power struggles which shape our lives. For myself and my studies then, much of my engagement with philosophy and theory has been underpinned by a need to understand and make sense of the world and to share that understanding. In this, as hooks (1994) describes "I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend – to grasp what was happening around and within me." (p.61) Further, as someone committed to decolonial and Black Marxist traditions, which have developed through and alongside Marx's critiques of capital, my interactions with philosophy have been motivated by a drive to show that there is an articulable logic to the world, a logic of profit and exploitation which dominates social relations. Navigating the often Eurocentric and Anglo-American biases within philosophical

cannon, I have aimed to find ways of translating and transforming the truths and conclusions of these radical anti-capitalist and decolonial traditions into my context as part of the Melanesian diaspora. Interrogating how, and if they can, contribute to the broader struggle for a collective Oceania.

This work of translating and experimenting with philosophy and theory, moving between western academia and the realities of working-class Melanesian life, was also key in my role as a mentor under the 'Tuākana, Māori and Pacific student mentoring programme.' In this position, for six years I supported and mentored undergraduate Māori and Pacific students through their philosophy courses. While working to help make sense of the different ideas and philosophical systems, I often found in my students frustrations at the limitations of these theories. Frustrations at the assumptions of these systems which proved incapable of translating to our Indigenous contexts and ways of interpreting the world. Rawlsian thought experiments for example – often interrogated from first to final year of undergraduate philosophy – were found to be structured on the assumptions of a rational, self-interested, individual behind a 'veil of ignorance.' (Rawls, 1971) As a thought experiment then, it struggled to make sense within Indigenous relational contexts and notions of the self (Wilson, 2008). As a mentor and as an activist, I also encountered students like myself, Pacific activists, revolutionaries, and artists of the diaspora and from our islands who sought to change and challenge the world. Pacific students who were less interested in performing for white crowds and audiences, than the ending of their world. Activists and artists who were not interested in a Pacific that meant reducing oneself to palatable bite sized cultural experiences, but rather who recognise in colonial-capitalism nothing more than barbarism, and as such are committed to its abolition. This thesis is for Oceanians who recognise that our future survival is contingent on the absolute death of this system, that there is nothing in it for us. It is to them who this thesis is addressed. It demonstrates that the call to Pacific collective identities, the call to Oceania, fundamentally requires the death of colonial-capitalism. Overarchingly for me then, engagement with theory and philosophy, while it has its own intrinsic value and worth, only truly realises its potential when it is turned towards changing the world. That is, echoing Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach (2002), translating and engaging with these ideas as an Oceanian theorist only made sense to me if the point was to try and change the world, not just interpret it. However, it must also navigate the material realities and struggles facing Indigenous communities.

Balancing the influences of the philosophy, theory, and political activism I am engaged in, while embracing Indigenous relational methodologies and examining the relationalities which inform it constitutes a key site of tension throughout this thesis. Moving between abstractions and political theory, while linking together my grounded experiences through *tok stori* and narrative can at times feels contradictory. Mediating the truths which underpin these sometimes conflicting world views is, however, necessary I think in bridging these systems to provide collective Oceanian theories of liberation and resistance. The theories engaged in this thesis facilitate a broader understanding of the power systems and structures in place which inhibit the possibility of Indigenous liberation, establishing the basis for the abolition of these systems. Theory is applied then, to provide clearer understandings of our broader social contexts, to try and accurately account for the nature of the world and its totalising systems. At the same time, my grounding in Indigenous relationality is key to contextualising and experimenting with these theories, testing what does and does not fit within Oceanian ways of understanding ourselves. In this, Teaiwa's (2014) assertion that theory is best understood as a tool for understanding the world and its systems of power and oppression informs the application of these ideas. The grounding in Indigenous relationalities, however, is not done on the supposition of an "essentialism and identity politics as a strategy for exclusion or domination." (hooks, 1994, p. 82). Rather, it is to demonstrate "that a critique of essentialism that challenges only marginalized groups to interrogate their identity politics or an essentialist standpoint… leaves unquestioned the critical practices of other groups." (Ibid.) Consequently, an engagement with Indigenous relationality is critical for providing counter narratives, for showing that the hegemonic order of relationality, that is, the capital relation, is as much derived from an assumed essentialism grounded in a colonial identity as our Indigenous relationalities. At the same time, as Coulthard (2014, p.79) asserts, this thesis recognises that assuming essentialist notions of Indigenous relationalities have the potential to give rise to group identities which can "too easily be deployed to justify repressive and authoritarian demands for group compliance… or sanction unjust practices of exclusion and marginalization". As such, this thesis at times engages in what Fanon (1963, p.40) describes as the process of 'stretching' theory, and in particular Marx, wherein he reminds us that "in the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure". Which is to say that when engaging in an analysis of racialised subjects and the systems by which the colonial-capitalist world 'parcels' out or divides the world up to oppress these subjects, class is necessary but not sufficient for accurately accounting for these

oppressive structures. That is, underpinning these divisions is a preliminary recognition of whether or not one belongs to the particular category of being which characterises modernity, whether or not one counts as belonging to the world.

My contemporary relationality to water then, shaped by the context of being on tank water and as such generally relying on what we collect from the rain, has meant that my relationship with water is constantly kept in check by the shifting seasons. For my family, our behaviours, and relationships with water change as the seasons do. For example, in the drier months several household rules kick into place, we begin to monitor the rain, making sure we know how many weeks or months it has been between rains and checking our tank levels. While the stakes are far less significant here in New Zealand where we have considerable social capital and support available in the face of shortage; the significance of water, and the moderately different relationship to it which was established by simply relying on rainwater for our tank, demonstrated to me from an early age that different relations to water are critically intertwined with their environments. In this, I'm reminded of a conversation I had with my mate Wardong, David Collard, an elder of the Noongar in Western Australia, whom I had the privilege of befriending during our time in 2019 at the 25th Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25). We were having a coffee, and he was asking me about my thesis – I gave some lazily rehearsed lines about wanting to write about water and its mistreatment, to defend it and so on and including an off-hand comment along the lines of "I just really want to write about the value of water." His joking reply rebuked me, "What the h*** do you know about water? We'll take you out with the mob back home, get you out in the desert for a couple of weeks and teach you its true worth!" And he was right; what did I, on my refillable tank water by the coast, know about valuing water compared to the way he knew to value water, what could I possibly know about the value of water compared to his mob, to their relationships to and with it when back home? This conversation with Wardong reiterated the crucial link between environment, experience, and Indigenous knowledges, practices, and relationships, particularly with regards to water. It demonstrated one of the key axioms of this thesis, namely that Indigenous communities relate to, understand, and conceive of water in unique and important ways, ways which will prove necessary in the navigation of our future crises and challenges. As such, this thesis appeals to Wilson's (2008) account of relationality, and relational accountability as fundamental components of Indigenous research paradigms and world views to demonstrate

what colonial-capitalism inhibits to secure its interests. It recognises that Indigenous practices and resistance enact relational forms which challenge the order and logics of colonial-capitalism. They enact relationalities which call into question the presumptions of colonial-capitalism's order and the divisions it imposes on the world.

This thesis looks to examine the essentialist relational forms colonial-capitalism imposes on water and Blackness. That is, it explores in detail two specific logics of colonial-capitalism which operate in Oceania to inhibit the fullness of our collective relationships to each other, these being aqua nullius and white supremacy. It considers how they deny the possibility of a new Oceania and what combatting these logics might necessitate in the struggle for our collective liberation. The direction of this investigation into the nature and stakes of aqua nullius and anti-Blackness, was fully realised following this interaction with Wardong and the outbreak of Covid-19 a few months later. With regards to the analysis of water relationality, I had been interested in its philosophical conceptualisations in the Pacific and had begun collating stories and texts which reflected these relationalities. In doing this, I encountered two issues which necessitated a rethinking of the direction of the thesis. The first, was that the Covid-19 pandemic imposed global restrictions on travel which meant that the possibility of engaging in Indigenous Oceanian *tok stori* and collating Oceanian philosophies and narratives around water while maintaining good relation, was limited. I was unable to return to my village to speak with my Bubu's and elders surrounded by our waters without imposing serious risks on my community. The second, was that in moving to articulate Indigenous Oceanic ways of relating to water, I found what was missing from the analysis was an understanding of colonial ways of relating to water.

Indigenous relationships to water, as shown by Hau'ofa (2008) for example, have recognised its sacredness and importance as a site of life and being, as a site of ancestral connections. Against this however, the nature of the colonial-capitalist relation from which these Indigenous relationships differed, was not explicitly clear. It was implicitly assumed, but not defined. Rather than just assuming the primacy of the capital social relation, this thesis has sought to interrogate the precise forms in which the colonial-capitalist relation structures Oceanian relationships to water and Blackness. Recognising these limitations, and having been trained in Western philosophy, I came to the decision that this thesis would have to turn to interrogating and defining the essentialist and implicitly assumed relation to water of colonial-capitalism.

In this, while Wardong knew the desert and the value of water in his own way, I also recognised that as part of the diaspora of the coastal Iokean peoples based in Aotearoa, I would have to approach it in my own way. I was also forced to ask; if Wardong was articulating different ways of assigning value to water, if my relationship to water was shaped so significantly by my history, my geography, my ancestry, what was this way of understanding, relating to, and valuing water that was the 'norm' – that we were differentiating our relations to water from? Understanding this essentialised 'neutral' or hegemonic way of relating to water, I reasoned, was necessary if we were to overthrow it, to truly fight for a new Oceania, fight for the right to relate to it in our own ways. My relationships with water throughout my life have shaped my decisions throughout this thesis, however, the theorists and thinkers, ideas, and lessons I have encountered throughout my academic journey have also played a key role in shaping this analysis.

Alongside my relationships to water and their influences on the direction of this thesis, my relationship to race and racialisation has been also played a significant role in shaping the parameters of this thesis. As a racialised body in a settler-colonial state, the systemic violences of white supremacy and racism have shaped much of my life. From microaggressions in daily interactions, to targeted arrests and detainment by the police during protests, from explicitly racist confrontations and struggles against white supremacists, to the dehumanising and violent 'nicknames' of boarding school culture, the colonial-capitalist world has imposed a violent racialisation on my being from the outset. In this, as is often part of the diasporic condition, finding where I fit in growing up was a struggle. When we moved from Tonga back to New Zealand my family ended up settling down in a predominately white suburb where, for my siblings and I as children, our racial difference resulted in a sense of hyper-visibility and an awareness of this difference. This was a consequence of the hyper-vigilance of security guards and shop owners, the predictable demands to open our bags and show our receipts, to take off our hoods and empty our pockets, simply becoming the mundane background noise of a schema of racialised encounters which sought to stake out and define us by our difference. In this, the search for a way of understanding and making sense of this racialisation and Indigeneity, this difference that I had come to represent, is a central concern of this analysis.

This racialised difference and othering also functioned according to an inability to be 'placed' within the organised schema of racialisation. I was Pacific, but not in the same way

as what *Pacific* meant. As a Melanesian, I was Pacific, but I was not, I was something different. This manifested in racialisations and sometimes lateral violence from our own communities. Even in supposedly progressive spaces, when planning and organising protests and demonstrations, often my presence did not constitute 'Pacific representation' at least not as the right kind of Pacificness. I became frustrated with celebrations of supposed collective Oceanian relationalities while our wantoks in West Papua were suffering under the genocidal regime of Indonesian occupation. I struggled to understand how anyone could celebrate our collective Oceanian identities while our peoples were systematically executed just a few beaches west of my village. The celebrations felt disingenuous. It felt as if the proper names 'Oceania' and 'the Pacific' were being weaponised by the colonial-capitalist logics of modernity to exclude Melanesia, to exclude West Papua from the outset. Brushed over by celebrations of culture absent of politics. Indeed, Hau'ofa (2008, p.19) notes this in his recognition that the inclusion of Melanesia under the category of the Pacific has been both applied and opposed strategically by Australia to protect their interests such that, in the case of Papua New Guinea for example, with the discovery of its vast mineral resources, "Papua New Guinea has been taken off the list of Pacific Islands by Australia and given a special status on its own". In this, even within the Pacific, amongst our own peoples, the logics of colonial-capitalism permeate our relationalities, denying us our right to belong. Central to this, as will be explored in the third section of this thesis, is the prevalence of white supremacy as the organising logic of racialisation in the Pacific as part of the system of colonial-capitalism.

Through this, the attempts to make sense of this particularly racialised identity, have also been structured in relation to an analysis of how we as Melanesians have come to fit in the broader framings and imaginaries of the Pacific. As such, I turn to Hau'ofa (2008) and the prospect of a new Oceania as the foundational goals and aims of this thesis; namely, how do we move towards and enact the collective ways of relating to and understanding ourselves he examines in his work. In the following chapter, I present my own particular reading of Hau'ofa's work, identifying what I maintain are the critical questions he poses for Oceania, and the significance of his struggle to reconcile difference and unity in the fight for a New Oceania.

Searching for Oceania

In this chapter, I present a retelling, a recounting, of some of the key ideas explored by Epeli Hau'ofa and his dream of a new Oceania. When I find myself inspired to tell a story, whether to teach, honour, remember, or laugh, I am often struck by the nuanced differences they take when I tell them, differences in which parts are important in the telling, in whose versions are more valuable at times. Telling a story is a social act, and though the stories might be the same, following certain necessary rhythms and tones; in different times and places, with different people, they inevitably shift and change, moulding to where, when, and with whom I am sharing. The context of the telling can be as important as the story itself, especially in a world as rapidly changing as the one we are in today. In this chapter I present a reading, a story, an account, of the Tongan-Fijian philosopher Epeli Hau'ofa and his insights into collective resistance and relationalities for the Pacific, so that they might better help us navigate the struggles we face today.

This reading brings Hau'ofa into an Oceania which faces a number of new and renewed existential and geo-political threats, including the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, the power struggle between the U.S. and China over global trade control, and perhaps most urgently the increasingly disruptive and catastrophic consequences of climate change which are disproportionately affecting our communities. It is also, in a personal manner, a reading of Hau'ofa by a diasporic Papua New Guinean/Pākehā who grew up in Auckland, New Zealand; an activist and a committed anti-capitalist who enters into conversation with Hau'ofa in the search for an Oceania which included his people, which included West Papua. It is a conversation with Hau'ofa prompted by a son of the Pacific diaspora in New Zealand, physically separated from his village and elders, a son of Iokea who found in Hau'ofa and his notion of Oceania a map back to his ancestors, his self, his stars, his waters. Thus, in what can perhaps at times feels like a hopeless situation, I offer a reading of Hau'ofa which intends to breathe air into and rekindle the flames of his radical hope and vision for Oceania, an Oceanic futurism which navigates past, present, and future, to help us build and rehabilitate the relations and alliances, which may prove necessary to our surviving the 21st century. An Oceanian future which will grow out of the ruins of colonial-capitalism.

This reading of Hau'ofa draws on Stein et al.'s (2017) framework of the 'House of Modernity' and their account of the epistemological, ontological, spiritual, and axiological

logics which structure the contemporary colonial-capitalist world, modernity, to provide a framework for identifying what it is precisely Hau'ofa was contesting. In drawing on the metaphor of the 'House of Modernity' I demonstrate the ways in which Hau'ofa's work articulates relationalities which strike at the foundations of the "ontological security" upon which the modern colonial-capitalist world is established (Stein et al. 2017, p.72). Hau'ofa thus presents a reorientating of the onto-epistemic foundations upon which our worlds are structured. The house of modernity adopts the imagery of a house to articulate four critical logics which overarchingly structure our contemporary world, these being Separability, Enlightenment Humanism, the Nation-State, and Global Capitalism. The metaphor of the house reinforces the familiarity and shelter, the comfort and appeal of modernity, it also however, demonstrates the frailty and the violence at the heart of its structure, the rot at its centre which necessitates its demolition. Stein et al. (2017) identifies these four key structures which together constitute the house which modernity has built. The house then, is built on the foundational logic of Separability, strengthened by the walls of Enlightenment Humanism, and the Nation State, to support the roof of Global Capitalism. For Stein et al. (2017) the foundation of separability signals a logic which moves to order the world, a logic of categorisation and infinitesimal definition across a strict hierarchy. In this, a general organising principle of non-equivalence, in which each part must be accorded its value and position – differentiated from each other, operates. Critically, this logic of ordering produces a hierarchy between different human cultural and racial groups via the logics of the wall of Enlightenment Humanism which presupposes a linear and universal notion of progress positing the white/European patriarchal form of being and organisation of society as the epitome of human development. Grounding itself in suppositions of a 'universal reason' and 'realism' Enlightenment Humanism suggests that the contemporary world, the power structures which define it, are born out necessity as part of the trend of human progression, justifying the violence at its core through the mandate of inevitable progress.

These divisions and hierarchies; their racialised nature, and their grounding in separability and humanism, are reinforced through the operations of the wall of the 'Nation-State.' In the ordering of the world then, the Nation-State becomes one of the key lines along which these divisions are drawn, through racial, geographic, and ethnic divisions maintained primarily in the interests of the roof of the house, Global Capitalism. The Nation-State and the violence it wields impose conditions not only on its population through the coercive

operations and the police, but also, if said nation is violent enough; through military occupation and policing of the world to protect their interests (Stein et al., 2017). Further, through neo-colonial practices, the very institution of nationhood itself has been weaponised in the interests of capital through the violent imposition of economic dependency in nations who have and continue to experience colonial occupation post-independence. Finally, the logics of Global Capitalism function to impose class distinctions and extract vast amounts of wealth from Indigenous territories and from the labour of the poor. In this, I stretch Stein et al. somewhat in that I argue that global capitalism, the economic structure established upon separability, enlightenment-humanism, and the nation-state, also simultaneously comes to determine the precise nature in which they operate. Thus, while separability and the operations of enlightenment-humanism serve to order the world according to a hierarchical value system, the comparative mechanism by which value is determined in this hierarchy functions according to the logics of global capitalism through the equivalent mechanism of monetary value and thus contribution to the interests of capital (Marx, 1990).

Similarly, the overarching 'interests' of the Nation-State are inextricably intertwined with the interests of global-capitalism, where the very formation of the modern Nation-State system and the imposition of neo-colonial independence, served to foster dependency on, and shared interests with global capitalism, allowing for the violent extraction of these nations resources and labour for cheaper prices (Nkrumah, 1965). Consequently, this thesis applies the term colonial-capitalism as a stand-in for Wallerstein's (1974) concept of 'global-capitalism' as the world system of today, as the overarching system which characterises the world as such. Such that "there is only *one* world-system. It is a world-economy, and it is by definition capitalist in form" (p. 415). It also adopts colonial-capitalism over Stein et al.'s notion of global-capitalism as the driving force of modernity. It does this deliberately to emphasise the explicitly imperialistic and colonial nature of the imposition of this system, that is, the violence which characterises its proliferation. Where Wallerstein's global-capitalism is presented devoid of a value judgment, I apply the term colonial-capitalism to explicitly call out its violence and condemn it. While this will be explored further in section two *Venus*, the articulation of these four logics, separability, enlightenment-humanism, the nation-state, and global capitalism, help to better identify the targets of Hau'ofa's analysis and precisely the nature with which his articulations of a new Oceania serve to strike at the

ontological and epistemological foundations, the ontological security of the colonial-capitalist world.

Andreotti's (2016) account of the 'Boxhead' also provides a means of conceptualising the consequences of this world system and the logics of modernity on the contemporary subject, such that the Boxhead is "an exteriorization of a Cartesian subject", this Cartesian subject being central to the modern subject (p.3). The Boxhead speaks to the different ways in which colonial-capitalism imposes boundaries and limitations on how one can engage with the world. Modernity's emphases of logocentrism, universalism, anthropocentrism, teleological reasoning, and allochronic thinking give rise to a limited means of interacting with and understanding the world.[1] Modernity thus enforces a particular way of relating to the world which is structured by the assumptions of linear, unfolding progressions of time, the privileging of written word over spoken, presumptions of universal laws and rules, and an emphasis of consequence rather than process. Ahenakew (2016) links the boxhead to Santos' notion of 'abyssal thinking' wherein Western notions of legitimacy partitions the world according to the logics of the boxhead. In this, the side of the boxhead and the ways of engaging with the world via Cartesian subjectivities, are determined to be the legitimate and proper ways of interacting with the world. All forms of relationality and engagement which sit outside these parameters are consequently assigned to the abyss, their legitimacy disregarded, and their logics dismissed. The boxhead and abyssal thinking function to deny the prospect of a difference, a contestation of the ways in which one comes to understand and interact with the world. That is, they deny Indigenous and anticolonial-capitalist relationalities, reducing them to the abyss where their value and input are undermined and opposed.

Drawing on these theoretical framings, I delve into the depths that are Hau'ofa's body of work reading him across global spatial and temporal shifts and exploring his encounters with Oceania in its multiplicity. In this, I examine the three temporally shifting framings of Oceania which Hau'ofa moves between in his work, that is, Oceania as past, present, and

[1] N.B. I disagree with and exclude here Andreotti's definition and inclusion of dialectical thinking as part of the boxhead as I do not think it accurately represents the tenets of dialectics, where Andreotti contends that it is a "linear logic averse to paradoxes, complexities, and contradictions." (p.4). This is contrasted with Hegelian and Fanonian dialectics which specifically emphasise the importance of contradiction and paradox as productive, extant, and necessary components of reality. In this, I think it is more Hegel's teleological application of dialectic to suggest an 'end' of philosophy and history which gives rise to the linear logic of the boxhead, as opposed to the dialectical methodology.

future. In proposing a means of navigating these differences of Oceania through time and space, Hau'ofa articulates the possibility of a framework, a narrative, which guides us in the navigation and overcoming of the structures of colonial-capitalism and modernity. As such, I begin with a brief biography, locating Hau'ofa in his world, his present; before turning to some of his key works; reading his texts together as different attempts or iterations to first identify and then formulate this idea, this notion of Oceania that he spends his life trying to articulate and develop. In particular, it traces in '*Anthropology and Pacific Islanders*' and '*The New South Pacific Society*' his earliest reflections on the material context he found himself in – the state of the Pacific as he was experiencing it. In these texts Hau'ofa offers his first critique and diagnosis of the state of the Pacific, of the Pacific he witnessed. This is exemplified first in its representation and othering in the colonial mindset through academia and second, in how this colonial mindset had come to pervade our own. He critiques then, how colonial capitalist social relations formed new social and political stratifications in our communities, dividing the Pacific further.

This critique of the representation of the Pacific, the internalisation of these representations and the adoption of colonial capitalist social relations by our communities, would contribute to and provide the preliminary base for his shift towards 'Project New Oceania' (Hau'ofa, 2008). I thus turn to the texts which constitute Hau'ofa's (2008) most rigorous attempts to articulate the idea of Oceania, namely, *Our Sea of Islands*, *The Ocean in Us*, and *Pasts to Remember*. Through these texts, I argue that Hau'ofa's account of Oceania morphs and shifts between three different temporal frames presenting the idea of Oceania as past, present, and future. That is, Hau'ofa articulates and untangles the collective identities of Oceania through our material pasts, existing presents, and immanent futures, navigating these different temporalties to radically re/imagine an Oceania capable of not only surviving but prospering in the 21st century and beyond. In this respect, he lays the foundations for a reinvigoration of critical discourses around Indigenous identities and relationships to time, space, and being, in Oceania.

Here, I further engage with some of Hau'ofa's contemporaries through an account of responses to his '*Our Sea of Islands*' collated in *A New Oceania* (1993), which demonstrate the stakes of Hau'ofa's intervention and some of the key pillars of this new Oceania Hau'ofa calls us to imagine. However, Hau'ofa was also intimately aware of the limitations of western academic discourse for communicating with our relations across Oceania and sought other

forms of communicating these ideas. (2008, p.97) As such, throughout his life and practice he sought to maintain and foster the development of the ideas of project new Oceania increasingly in the realm of art and the aesthetic. In this respect, Hau'ofa demonstrates the crucial role of the aesthetic realm in re/imagining the radical promise of Oceania, and the capacity of art to foster and strengthen Oceanic futurities. I finish by examining the implications and consequences of rethinking time and space in Oceania, the role of the aesthetic realm in facilitating the formation of these identities, and the complications our contemporary material context presents in navigating these ideas. In doing so, I emphasise the kernel of radical hope in Hau'ofa's thought, the radical, yet humble demands to overthrow colonial narratives, identities, and subjectivities in defence of remembered and reimagined relations, outside of the constraints of colonial-capitalist logics.

Finding Hau'ofa

As I begin this story, I am reminded of the lament by the poet Karlo Mila (2005) that she only ever had the chance to meet Hau'ofa on the page, in his writing, as I thus find myself in a similar situation, encountering Hau'ofa in the exchanging of ideas and in the written word (Mila-Schaaf, 2009, p.1). In this respect, there is perhaps little I can offer in the way of an account of his life that others, more acquainted and better equipped to discuss have not already offered.[2] Rather, what I hope to do is to weave together a broader account of the shifts in colonial and capital relations which took place during Hau'ofa's life and show how these shifts came to influence his thought. I endeavour then to examine what structures were underpinning some of Hau'ofa's decisions, and to interrogate how they impose certain limitations in applying his work today. In locating Hau'ofa, both in the history of the Pacific and in the global geopolitical context, I aim to link the different iterations of Oceania which are threaded throughout his work to broader theoretical trends in Indigenous theory and the critiques of colonisation and capitalism. I also aim to substantiate his claims, engaging in some of the philosophical and theoretical heavy lifting to strengthen his analyses. In doing so, I place Hau'ofa amongst global traditions of radical Black and Indigenous struggle against colonisation and capitalism while highlighting the specific and important nature of his intervention for navigating the different temporal iterations of Oceania. Where 'past' is brought into the present through culture and tradition, where 'future' is gestured towards in the immanence of an Oceania to come, and where 'present' is embodied in the material

[2] See for example, 'A New Oceania' (1993), or 'Epeli's Quest: Essay in Honour of Epeli Hau'ofa' (2010)

contexts we encounter, mediating both past and future to navigate its world. The mediation of these three temporal relationships to Oceania establishing the importance of navigating difference and positing the imperative of a radical transformation of our current socio-economic structures.

Epeli Hau'ofa was born in 1939, in what was then the Australian administered territories of Papua and New Guinea. Throughout this life, Hau'ofa bore witness to a number of massive shifts and events in Oceania and around the world which would come to influence his work. In Hau'ofa's early childhood the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour directly brought the Pacific and the Pacific theatre of the Second World War increasingly into global focus. Japanese imperialism in the Pacific, their occupations of a number of islands across the sea, and their eventual overthrow by allied forces would set the basis for a fundamental reordering in these territories. The global aftermath of the Second World War, in which many European states including the Dutch, the United Kingdom and France, were destitute from the continued costs of fighting the war and in desperate need of economic aid to rebuild and repair their infrastructure and stabilise their economies following German occupation, saw a fundamental reordering of global power. The United States, which, while also joining the war later than other nations, and having avoided outright conflict for the most part on its shores, consolidated global power through finance programmes to European powers through deals such as the Anglo-American loan (Gannon, 2014). These agreements would give them increasing political sway and power in international disputes, and positioned them as a major player, a core nation in the post Second World War order (Wallerstein, 1975). Hau'ofa then, was raised in a Pacific which was increasingly becoming a key site for American military expansionism, where through the testing of nuclear weapons, resource extraction, and military occupation, American and European powers sought to protect the interests of their nation-states.

At the same time, in the aftermath of World War II with the formation of the United Nations under the United Nations Charter and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international mechanisms for the liberation of colonial territories, or 'non-self-governing' territories seemingly opened up new possibilities in the struggle against colonial oppression. Decolonial resistance around the world was reinvigorated with the condemnation of German imperialism, such that struggles for freedom and independence from colonial oppression sought to utilise these new legal mechanisms to secure them. This

resistance, coupled with the unwillingness of European nations to get drawn into costly and prolonged conflicts given their debts following the Second World War ushered in a global shift in foreign policy with many European nations outwardly relinquishing their colonial power, in favour of letting 'democratic' institutions and the market economy dominate, and securing their economic interests often by saddling these nations they had colonised and pillaged with debt. Thus, the latter half of the 20th Century saw the newly formed United Nations oversee the 'decolonisation' of former colonial territories in accordance with Article 73 of Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter, and Resolution 637 which linked self-determination to the definition of a non-self-governing state. Whilst touted as a period of global 'decolonisation,' Hau'ofa (2008) himself notes that decolonisation was one of the key mechanisms which led to the establishing of the singular hegemonic capitalist economic system across the Pacific. The works of Aimé Césaire (1950), Kwame Nkrumah (1965), and Thomas Sankara (1989), further identify how many of these independence movements were subsumed under and corrupted by forms of neocolonialism which weaponised debt and foreign aid dependency to enforce colonial capitalist social relations.

Wallerstein's account of world-systems theory (1974) reminds us that this dependence is structurally imposed as a product of global capitalism and these neocolonial logics and enforced by a series of divisions across the order of nation-states. The flows of capital and wealth are thus dictated by and driven by core-nations, the hegemonic powers of the world, who reap the rewards of wealth and labour extraction from 'periphery,' nations and their structural dependence on these systems. This exploitation thus being facilitated by semi-periphery nations who administer the periphery nations on behalf of the interests of core nations and colonial-capitalism. Underpinning this exploitation then, is the function of a process of unequal exchange established on the colonial legacies and valorisation of capital within core nations, compounding their wealth and exploitative capacities. What becomes clear is that under colonial-capitalism our global order and 'peace' is structurally maintained by the threat of economic or military violence from hegemonic powers and their vigilant policing of this world-systems interests. Analysing colonial-capitalism as the world-system in general thus facilitates this account of Hau'ofa and his Oceania as it demonstrates the fundamental ways in which modernity operates to suppress the Pacific and calls for collective relationalities. It demonstrates the ways in which colonial-capitalism wields the nation state and its interests to procure its profits.

In the Pacific neo-colonialism and capitalist relations spread, generally, through the administration of Pacific Islands, through intermediary or semi-periphery powers such as Australia and New Zealand. While Australia and New Zealand had administered Pacific islands prior to the Second World War, their roles were fundamentally reconfigured in its aftermath as they took on a more active role in enforcing the interests of the United States and their allies. Importantly, certain core and semi-periphery nations such as Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Canada, were exempted from Article 73, Resolution 637, under the 1952 'Salt Water Thesis' (or 'Blue Water Doctrine'), which limited "the right to decolonise… to Indigenous peoples whose lands were being governed from afar." (Jackson, 2020, p.105). Formal decolonisation under the UN was only applicable in instances in which water functioned to separate the colonial territory from its coloniser. Pacific nation-states such as Samoa, Niue, and Rarotonga thus remained, or came under the administration of the New Zealand Government, and the territories of Papua and New Guinea under the administration of the Australian government. Australia and New Zealand consequently played a key role in subsuming the Pacific under neo-colonialism and the interests of capitalism through the fostering of foreign aid dependency, the implementation of cheap migrant labour schemes, and the privatisation of communal lands. What Hau'ofa (2008) describes as integration ultimately benefitted Australia and New Zealand in their semi-periphery role as "for what they give out in aid they receive in return a great deal more in the forms of export earnings and repatriation of profits on investments. (p.20) In this they were not administering our nations for the sake of developing or stabilising them, but rather, to protect and develop the interests of capital, securing both profits and cheap labour from the Pacific as well their position as semi-periphery nations. As such, these administrative periods would pave the way for the broader domination of colonial-capitalist relations that would take seize the Pacific in the late 20th Century.

In his twenties Hau'ofa witnessed a Pacific in which decolonial movements continued to rise across the Pacific altering the land and seascape. These efforts were bolstered by the 1960 UN adoption of Resolution 1514 (XV) which affirmed in letter the right for all remaining non-self-governing territories to self-determination. The earliest consequences of these shifts were felt in two significantly different ways. In the first instance the peaceful 'Mau' resistance movements against New Zealand's colonial administration of Samoa, coupled with international pressure following the Black Saturday incident, culminated in the

recognition of Samoan independence in 1962 and the establishing of an independent Samoan state (Wendt, 1965). In the second, the weaponisation of these mechanisms by Indonesia in accordance with American and European capitalist interests allowed them to claim the disputed territory of West Papua at gun point in 1969. As will be explored further in the third section of this thesis, Koreri, Indonesia began to sue for independence from the Dutch in 1945. Their victory with the Dutch recognition of Indonesian independence in 1949, crucially left the question of West Papuan governance unanswered (Swan, 2022; Webb-Gannon, 2021).

Indonesian independence had come with a price tag for the newly formed state, as they were forced to agree to take on the administrative and war incurred debts of the Dutch. These debts would have far reaching consequences for the Pacific as the economic interests of Indonesia would see them fight to seize control of West Papua due to its abundant and valuable natural resources. As such, throughout the 1950s and 60s, Indonesia leveraged these international mechanisms, American fears of a communist 'domino' effect, the threat and actuality of military invasions, and strongarm tactics until via the New York Agreement and 'Act of *No* Free Choice,' Indonesia imposed their rule over West Papua (Swan, 2022; Webb-Gannon, 2021). As will be discussed further in the third section of this thesis, Koreri, they have since embarked on a programme of genocide and exploitation, oppressing the West Papuans to establish themselves as an economic power through the mining of mountains, razing of forests, and selling of West Papuan seas and their resources.

In this respect, colonialism established two pathways for capital into the Pacific. The difference being contingent on both the economic opportunities these 'non-self-governing' and 'former non-self-governing territories' presented to the United States of America and their allies in capitalism, as well as the racialised hierarchies underpinning the interests of white supremacy which served to legitimate and justify the violent oppression of the second path. For Polynesian nations there was the possibility of decolonisation through the legal mechanisms of the U.N., while for Melanesia decolonisation was delayed and denied, securing the interests of colonial-capitalism. Thus, Pacific nations were faced with a choice. On the one hand they could either suffer the consequences of renewed forms of settler colonialism and violent primitive accumulation as was seen in West Papua and Banaba or, on the other, they could be assimilated into the global economy via neocolonialism, through foreign aid and the influence of New Zealand and Australia, establishing what Hau'ofa

(2008) would describe as the 'new south Pacific society.' Throughout the latter half of the 20th century then, these situations unfolded across the Pacific and across the globe as debt and private ownership were wielded to enshrine colonial-capitalist systems to preserve their interests and exacerbate racial tensions while appearing to decolonise these former territories. In all cases however, these former colonies became trapped in the capital relation as a direct result of foreign investment and aid fostering dependency on the capitalist systems to survive (Nkrumah, 1965; Hau'ofa, 2008). Driving these interventions were the interests of colonisation and capitalism defended by the United States of America and their allies through staunchly pro-capitalist, anti-communist foreign policies which came to dominate much of global politics in the latter half of the 20th Century.

The neo-colonial period signalled the rise of aberrant forms of colonial-capitalist expansion which sought to maintain resource and wealth extraction from the global south while appearing progressive through the legal mechanisms developed by the United Nations. These mechanisms imposed dependency on capital and the support of colonial powers reintegrating and reasserting their interests under the guise of aid and economic freedom (Nkrumah, 1965). Further, these mechanisms continue to be wielded on the international stage to maintain the oppression of the Indigenous peoples all around the world. Thus, as decolonial liberation movements reignited across the Pacific, Hau'ofa bore witness to scenes of resistance and solidarity as these nations fought to liberate and define themselves. However, he also bore witness to the ways in which neo-colonialism and the tendrils of capital began to pervade Pacific social relations. Hau'ofa saw how the colonial 'othering' of the nations of the Pacific was weaponised in narratives which reduced us to small islands nations in a large inhospitable ocean (Hau'ofa, 2008). These early experiences would have a lasting influence on Hau'ofa, forming the basis for ongoing struggle against colonialism in the Pacific and his recurring critique of the logics of colonisation and capitalism. However, if the immediate post-war period ushered in reinvigorated avenues for neo-colonialism under the language of liberation, the 1970's and 1980's would similarly bring about increasingly volatile and corrosive shifts in capitalism, shifts which would have consequences for the Pacific and our regional dependency on capital.

Early Oceanian Experiments

Epeli the Anti-Racist

In 1975 Hau'ofa completed his PhD in social anthropology at Australia National University (Hau'ofa, 2008). Their experiences growing up in Papua New Guinea and throughout the Pacific, and studying anthropology in Australia, informed Hau'ofa's earliest critiques of the othering of the Pacific. Hau'ofa (2008) delivered a paper that year entitled *Anthropology and Pacific Islanders* in which they voiced frustrations at the belittling and undermining of the Pacific. In it Hau'ofa identified the misrepresentations of the peoples of the Pacific, the fundamentally racist and white supremacist logics which established and underpinned colonial theorists' engagements with the Pacific, demonstrating how these logics still function in academic disciplines. Hau'ofa critiques in particular the early violences of racialisation and the ontological divisions which were embedded in the distinctions drawn between Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian subjectivities.

Critically, Hau'ofa recognised that in relation to the immense diversity and difference which characterises the Pacific, particularly in Melanesia, anthropology incorporated myopic and reductive conceptualisations of Black life in the Pacific in their attempts to palatably categorise, define, and diminish our differences. With regards to anthropology as a field engaging with Melanesia Hau'ofa accuses anthropologists of having "neglected to portray them as rounded human being." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.7). This being exemplified in the grafting of the "caricature of the quintessential Western capitalist: grasping, manipulative, calculating, and without a stitch of morality" onto Melanesian leaders (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.5). In this respect, the logics of white supremacy and schemas of proximity to whiteness, adherences to the tenets of colonial-capitalism served as the measure by which they dissected the Pacific. With often lighter skinned Polynesian and Micronesian life in the Pacific was accorded a higher value than the darker 'Melanesian' Pacific, where the "pseudo-evolutionary comparison between the 'developed' Polynesian polities and the 'underdeveloped' Melanesian ones" functioned to divide our collective peoples against each other (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.6). The insidious nature of this valuation, and division, still operating within Pacific own communities today as Arvin (2019) demonstrates in her text *Possessing Polnesians*.

In the violence of colonialism which divided the Pacific against itself a shift took place in the schemas of oppression. With the advent of the Enlightenment period and its

supposed turn to rationalism and empiricism, an era incorporating pseudoscientific eugenicist, and white supremacist logics was used to justify the difference between the peoples of the Pacific across a schema of civilisational as well as racial and racist biases established in the developing 'race science' (Arvin, 2019). This hierarchy was dependent on what the colonisers defined and then observed as either 'more' or 'less' civilised peoples. Identifying the presence of nation formation and monarchies as indicators of cultural supremacy, and adhering to the linear presumptions of development and progress of enlightenment humanism (Stein et al., 2017). This working in tandem with modernity's focus on dividing up, counting, and applying schemas of value to the world, its separability functioned to divide the Pacific.

In the enlightenment humanist dividing of the Pacific, the presence of both lighter skin and forms of governance which Europeans valued within its schema of progress such as monarchies and state formations, meant that the Polynesia and Micronesia were accorded a different onto-epistemic valuation to Black Oceania. This can be identified in the works Charles de Brosses and Johann R. Forster, whose analyses of Melanesia interpreted it within the enlightenment humanist schemas of ontological violence, imposing a false division of the peoples of the Pacific against ourselves (Tcherkézoff, 2003; Arvin, 2019). These sciences and this developing period of race science allowed for a rationalisation of the onto-epistemic violence the imposition of this system imposed. They served to justify its violence by relegating Melanesian to a subontological condition. Colonial-capitalism thus justified its violence through a schema of race science where Black life in the Pacific was relegated to the borderline subhuman from its first interaction. Where colonial-capitalism imposed a "barrier between humans and animals [which] could not be crossed" but asserted that some human races could be interpreted along a schema of value "went from 'savagery' bordering on animality to 'civilisation.'" (Tcherkézoff, 2003, p.183). However, the development of the scientific method, interwoven with the inherent white supremacy of colonial-capitalism led to forms of ontological violence which blended these cultural hierarchies with the genetic distinguishing of different 'racial groups' according to the growing pseudo-scientific fields of Eugenics and race 'science' (Arvin, 2019)

This early race science, particularly prevalent in the fields of biology and psychology, purported to ground itself in an objective scientific method whereby biases and religious dogma were seemingly overturned. The desire to articulate, name, and define the world,

however, was still fundamentally grounded in modernity's supposition of separability, the application of a colonial, white supremacist, capitalist logic which sought to partition the world to dominate it. Here then, the two intertwining logics of separability and humanism, key logics which structure modernity came together to differentiate and organise the multiplicity of bodies and phenotypes, semiotic signifiers, across not just a racial or civilisational hierarchy, but an ontological one Stein et al. (2017). Indeed, separability differentiates "humans from one another, ranking them into racial/civilisational hierarchies." (Stein et al. 2017 p. 73) This functioning to rationalise the existence of those who are separated and counted not as human, but as object, reduced to the sub-ontological from the outset - those whose exclusion is the condition upon the which the world is structured, modernity and the white conscience.

In this respect, the cultural and civilisational forms of separability were subsumed under eugenicist, skin-colour, and race-based hierarchies which adopted the language of science and supposed objectivity to assign value to these differences. In particular the logics of separability and enlightenment humanism came together in the formation of a Black Oceania, or Melanesian identity, wherein modernity fundamentally denied Melanesia any agency, any value as peoples of the Pacific. This, as I aim to show, being grounded in the necessity of colonial-capitalism to dehumanise Black life, and secure the exploitation of the Pacific's resources. It operated to relegate Melanesia to a subontological condition, disregarding our humanity to justify its violent exploitation, first in enslaving, and then in oppressing through occupation. Separability, enlightenment humanism, and western science have been weaponised against Melanesian and Black life in the Pacific. This is central to the key issues described and contested by Hau'ofa in *Anthropology and Pacific Islanders*. In this respect, Hau'ofa (2008), establishes the foundations in this paper for the deeper interrogation of the onto-epistemic conditions of Melanesian, or Black Oceanian life. An interrogation which this thesis engages in under the third section, Koreri. Importantly, through his articulation of these issues and the belittlement of the Pacific however, the foundations of the call for a new world are clear this piece, a call a new Oceania and the turning away from the embedded logics of modernity such as separability.

Epeli the Anti-Capitalist

> [T]here already exists in our part of the world a single regional economy upon which has emerged a South Pacific society, the privileged groups of

> which share a single dominant culture with increasingly marginalised subcultures shared by the poorer classes. (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.11)

In his 1985 essay, '*The New South Pacific Society*,' (NSPS) Hau'ofa (2008), while navigating his earlier frustrations with modernity's depiction of Melanesia and the Pacific, presents an account of the potential value and significance of a strong Pacific regional identity. This essay laid the foundations for his formal articulation of Oceania. While he was still developing the language for exploring a Pacific regional identity under the formal name 'Oceania', this essay is important insofar as Hau'ofa not only examines the power of a collective regional identity for the Pacific, but also critiques what he saw as the false Pacific regional identities emerging around him. In this respect, I propose that the NSPS should be read in part as Hau'ofa's articulation of what Oceania *is not*, a warning against the ways in which regional identities, and even the idea of Oceania, have and can be co-opted by the interests of capital through the Pacific bourgeoisie – the emergent 'South Pacific society.' As such, this essay also constitutes Hau'ofa's most scathing critique of capitalism and the role of neo-liberal capitalism in exploiting the Pacific. He notes that under the stewardship of New Zealand and Australia "all the countries in the South Pacific have been drawn into a single economic system controlled by transnational industrial, commercial, and financial interests backed and defended by powerful governmental and military organisations working closely with each other." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.11). This single economic system, he continues has been propped up by the formation of aid groups, forums, and financial institutions across the Pacific which have promoted economic cooperation and the advancement of capitalist economic development.

In the aftermath of the formal 'decolonisation' of many of the islands across the Pacific the imposition of neo-colonial institutions for the promotion of colonial-capitalism became widespread and a regional society "emerg[ed] from the process of decolonisation that, contrary to stated intentions has integrated the Pacific Islands into the Australian/New Zealand economy." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.11). Through the establishing of institutions such as the 'South Pacific Forum,' the 'South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation,' the 'Pacific Islands Forum (PIF),' the 'Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum' and even 'The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)' during the 'decolonisation' of the Pacific, colonial-capitalist initiatives, through education, aid, and investment in the Pacific, developed a Pacific elite, a collective, regional society which

sought to protect the interests of these initiatives (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.12). Consequently "instead of increasing self-reliance the development trends over the past decades have been towards economic and social integration." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.20). This regional society, the 'South Pacific society', is fundamentally established on colonial-capitalist relationality and is intimately intertwined with the economic interests of global capitalism such that, "all the economies of the South Pacific Forum countries are so tied to that of Australia and New Zealand that they cannot be considered separate entities." (Hau'ofa 2008, pp.11-12). This collective regional identity has enforced limitations around how the Pacific has come to define itself and has facilitated increasingly violent forms of exploitation across our ocean, abusing our labour and resources in the pursuit of profit.

In the following section, Venus, this thesis examines explicitly, the ways in which this identity has come to strain and compromise Indigenous Oceanian water relationality. Hau'ofa (2008) explores the consequences and issues that arise when we allow the Pacific to be constrained this way – specifically, how, through the imposition of class-based hierarchies, the denigration and ill-treatment of the poor, the Pacific is divided against itself through class and subsumed under a unified regional economy. In the NSPS more so than other papers Hau'ofa ascribes to class a significant and overdetermining function over racialisation such that "the poor in the islands are not so different in their relative deprivation from the poor in New Zealand and Australia." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.14). Hau'ofa is clear that the development of this 'South Pacific society' was promoted to facilitate the expropriation of wealth and labour from resource rich Pacific nations, whereby the elites of the Pacific, as well as the rest of the world, benefit from this violence against the poor. Importantly then, against a nationalistic point of view which would render either the Australian or New Zealand economies as that which benefits most from this economic exploitation, Hau'ofa's analysis demonstrates that from a regional analysis of the collective Pacific economy, "the main beneficiaries are the privileged, elite groups all over the region, not just Australia or New Zealand" groups around which this 'South Pacific society' has formed. (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.12). In recognising the realities of the regional class solidarities which form out of the imposition of the capitalist economy across the Pacific, Hau'ofa also identifies the ways in which the South Pacific society and its administration on behalf of capital functions to produce cultural hegemony.

Central to Hau'ofa's critique of the South Pacific society is that not only does it produce a singular economy, but a singular culture, such that "among the privileged there is

homogeneity throughout the region through the sharing of a single dominant culture." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.13). Thus, as well as his recognition of the class dynamics operating throughout the Pacific, Hau'ofa draws attention to the role of capitalism in enforcing a form of cultural homogeneity, where difference is subsumed under a palatable 'idea' of the Pacific and ceremonies and rituals are only allowed to persist if they fit into archetypal 'Pacific' (read Polynesian) ideas around Pacific traditions. (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.13). There is a critical gap between the Pacific bourgeoisie and the poor wherein "their perceptions of which traits of traditional culture to preserve are increasingly divergent from those of the poor." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.14). This cultural hegemony is reinforced through educational and employment schemes which work to assimilate budding Pacific scholars and leaders into the South Pacific society, indoctrinating them into what Hau'ofa notes as the 'Pacific Way.' Through the 'Pacific way' the widespread acceptance and reproduction of a 'palatable' version of Pacific tradition and culture was prioritised, an image of the Pacific which operated to appease white sensibilities rather than genuinely represent the interests of the broader Pacific.

In this, the emphasis of the Pacific way led to a focus on recognition through cultural expression where what it means to be 'Pacific' is essentialised to produce a homogenous notion of Pacificness that reinforces the interests of colonial-capitalism. Both against and through these attempts to define the Pacific, Hau'ofa argues, the underprivileged, the poor, adopt their own subcultures "modified versions of Indigenous cultures that existed before the capitalist penetration of the South Pacific." (2008, p.13) However this subcultural diversity is leveraged against poor Pacific communities as the underlying rationale for our continued lack of success under capital. Here colonial-capitalism asserts that failure to advance along the linear path of progress and development is the result of the Pacific's many differences and cultural nuances, its diversity (Stein et al. 2017). The differences which constitute us and make us the Pacific are thus presented as the cause for our continued oppression and exploitation. While Hau'ofa responds to this argument by proposing that the most important difference operating in the Pacific to oppress our peoples is class, in the third section of this thesis, Koreri, I return to this question and build on Hau'ofa's analyses by drawing out the specific implications of a Black Oceanian ontological condition to his work, asserting that a New Oceania requires that we cannot do away with difference altogether.

In these early texts Hau'ofa determines two core antagonisms or contradictions embedded within the current form of regional or collective identity imposed by colonial-

capitalism. A collective identity whose presence categorically destabilises and ultimately divides our region against itself through the imposition of these antagonisms, integrating it into the logics of modernity. These two antagonism; racial homogenisation and economic homogenisation, establish the foundations for his proposal to reconceptualise Pacific collective relationality and critically shape his later work. The first, the colonial imposition of a racialised hierarchical system of ordering life, with logics of separability and white supremacy underpinning this system and according higher values to social, cultural, and economic proximity to whiteness, denies the prospect of meaningful cultural difference. The second, the capitalist imposition of a homogenous regional economy, the nature of capital as an overdetermining social relation which bundles the Pacific together under its logics to better exploitation our environment and peoples.

It is important to note then, that Hau'ofa's critique is not a critique of the fact of a collective Pacific regional identity and economy, but rather, of the particular form that current attempts at Pacific regionalism have adopted. Thus, it is the particular nature of colonial-capitalism that through neo-colonial mechanisms and institutions such as the United Nations that this way of understanding the world is hegemonically enforced and maintained, a way which is, by its very nature, antagonistic to the Indigenous and collective Pacific/Oceanic world views. What Hau'ofa turns to is both a new and old way of understanding the collective regional identity of the Pacific, one which can seemingly overcome these antagonisms grounded in foreign world views, and guide us through the struggles we face today.

Project New Oceania

> We have to bequeath to future generations more memories of our recent past and our present than we ourselves remember of our remote pasts. (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.69)

In this, the three texts *Our Sea of* Islands, The *Ocean in Us*, and *Pasts to Remember*, written over a period of seven years constitute Hau'ofa's most explicit attempt to articulate the theoretical foundations and nuances of his conceptualisation of "Project New Oceania" a collective, powerful, regional identity for the Pacific (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.xiv). Across these texts, Hau'ofa builds and defines his conceptualisation of Oceania and the potential for a new form of Oceanian relationality, one which he believes will strengthen Oceania in the struggle

to overcome and exceed the limitations of colonial-capitalism. In this 'Project New Oceania' Hau'ofa offers three ways of rethinking Oceanian identities and conceptualisations by examining the difference ways in which the Pacific has been onto-epistemically limited and inhibited by colonial-capitalism. As the prospect of a collective identity which challenges colonial-capitalist relational structures – which looks to go beyond the onto-epistemic limitations of modernity – I contend that Oceania should be understood as the proper name for decolonisation across the Pacific. Where, drawing on Stein et al.'s (2020) framework for decolonisation, Hau'ofa's Oceania is best understood as a project within the 'beyond-reform' space of decolonial action.

Through these essays, Hau'ofa experiments with ways of breaking these logics, of challenging and uprooting the spatio-temporal frameworks of modernity. Building on his recognition of the reality of a colonial-capitalist regional system which enforces cultural homogeneity, articulated in the NSPS, Hau'ofa stresses the importance of reclaiming and rethinking Pacific forms of collective regional identities to oppose these narratives. The concept and necessity of Oceania is established through three temporal framings, Oceania as past, Oceania in the present, and a possible Oceania of the future, a new Oceania, to facilitate a rethinking of collective regional Oceanian identities. First, the proper name Oceania signifies the historical reality of a collective regional identity which preceded colonial-capitalist expansion into the Pacific, our shared legacies, and histories. Second, it signifies the contemporary existence of forms of persistent regional identities which our peoples navigate in their day to day lives, our shared realities. Last, the proper name Oceanian signifies the prospect of future grounded in remembered forms of relating to each other and the world, our shared possible futures. It signifies the struggle for a future which overcomes the realities of our contemporary globalised context to prioritise the Indigenous relationalities through which our ancestors have nurtured and cultivated our oceans, our lands, and our peoples for millennia. In short, it is the proper name for a decolonial future, one in which Oceania persists beyond colonial-capitalism. Oceania, in representing the prospect of being a good ancestor and leaving a better world for those that will come after us, signifies nothing less than the decolonisation of the Pacific ocean.

In '*Our Sea of Islands*' [OSoI] Hau'ofa (2008) begins by introducing the foundations and hopes for his intervention and its contribution to the struggle against the colonial-capitalist world. In this, he also introduces an important pedagogical and epistemological

paradigm which has been integral in the feedback and relational accountability aspect of the analyses of this thesis. This being that the value of the struggle for a new Oceania is determined in its capacity to motivate hope and resistance in the next generation of Oceanian activists, artists, and academics. For Hau'ofa, Oceania means hope. In particular, he maintains that the influences of the racialised hierarchies of white supremacy, and class divisions which develop out of capitalism, function to 'other' and divide the Pacific against itself, to diminish and undermine our sense of self, sense of collective strength and being. Ultimately OSoI is presented by Hau'ofa as an account of Oceania today, of the ways in which its relationalities persist, and are always within our grasp.

In this respect OSoI was written "with the aim of exorcising a particularly nasty ghost, the ghost of belittlement." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.xiv). To exorcise this ghost, a central motivation for his work became the establishing of narratives which stood against the narratives he had been teaching, which left him complicit in proliferation of narratives of belittlement while struggling to offer alternatives. (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.28). That is, Hau'ofa sought to establish narratives which reinforced and defended the mana, strength, and value of Oceania, narratives which upheld and would uplift the generations of Oceania to come. Importantly, there is a further point Hau'ofa demonstrates here pedagogically. The key relational mechanism through which he became aware that his teaching was harming his students and the Pacific and was no longer tenable came through the distress of his students. In this he realised that his relational responsibility to them as a teacher was to lift them up, to offer alternatives. What became clear to Hau'ofa was that it was also what he was teaching that was contributing to the fundamental diminishing of his Pacific students' sense of self and the ways in which "their faces crumbled" in response to his lessons (Ibid, p.28-29). What Hau'ofa (2008) demonstrates in this interaction is the foundational significance of relational accountability in the narratives and framings with which he presents Oceania (Wilson, 2008).

Embedded within his beckoning towards a new Oceania is the fundamental feedback mechanism of his student's hopes, particularly his Pacific students, and the significance of whether or not the narratives articulated empower the Pacific or belittle it. In this, my experiences as both the Tuākana Mentor for philosophy, and as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for students in SOCIOL307, "Sociology of the Pacific," at the University of Auckland has also come to provide moments and opportunities for feedback, particularly from my Pacific students. These interactions with my Pacific students have come to inform

and develop these ideas and this reading of Hau'ofa, reinvigorating the search for narratives which lift our students and give them hope for future to come. This reading of Hau'ofa was also formed in response to the sometimes diluted readings of his work, readings of Hau'ofa which seem to enforce those feelings of smallness and hopelessness in Pacific students. In this I assert that today there has been a 'Che Guevaraisation' of Hau'ofa's work, a co-option by modernity wherein appeals to a notion of Oceania lack an account of his more radical critiques of colonial-capitalism and its legacies in the Pacific. Hence, we see organisations such as the 'Pacific Community' formally the South Pacific Commission, an organisation explicitly named by Hau'ofa as constituting the new South Pacific Society, appealing to Hau'ofa and his notion of Oceania, while ignoring his critique of their role in perpetuating the oppression and belittling of our peoples (SPREP, 2022). This reading of Hau'ofa is one which opposes these false Oceania's which commit themselves implicitly through enlightenment humanism, separability, and the nation-state, to a logic of colonial-capitalist realism opting to work within the system rather than against it. It recognises the need to strive towards then end of the colonial-capitalist world. These readings of Hau'ofa have prompted me to articulate a more radical dream at play in his analysis, to provide a reading of Hau'ofa which pushes at the limits of this world and proposes to move beyond it.

While the development and maintenance of narratives which empower and uplift Oceania becomes an organising principle for Hau'ofa, he explicitly notes that these narratives must be grounded in material analysis. As a collective possibility Oceania must establish itself and its future irrefutably such that "any new perspective… must be well researched and thought out if it was to be taken seriously." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.30). To ground his account of the historical nature of a collective Oceanian region, in OSoI, Hau'ofa turns to Indigenous Oceanian cosmologies, and the realities of how our ancestors understood and recognised their worlds. Hau'ofa shows that, against narratives which perceive our territories as small, isolated islands, our ancestors recognised the interconnected nature of our shared ocean, the immensity of their worlds. Worlds where, for example, stories of powerful Oceanian athletes capable of throwing their "javelin[s] with such force that it pierced the horizon and disappeared until that night when it was seen streaking across the sky like a meteor" demonstrate the immensity of our cosmological world concepts (Ibid, p.31). Indeed, outside of our narratives and mythologies, complex, widely dispersed precolonial trade networks persisted throughout the Pacific, evidenced in the presence of pottery traditions shared across

islands and, within large islands like those of Papua New Guinea and West Papua – between highland and lowland/coastal communities through trade. Rather than functioning as 'towers of Babel' comprised of disparate peoples incapable of communicating with each other, vast regions of Melanesia were "integrated by trading and cultural exchange systems." (Ibid, p.33). What is key here, is Hau'ofa's recognition that historically, both through our traditional trade routes, and through our mythologies and conceptualisations of the world, Oceania has always conceptualised and understood itself as vast and immense. The diminishing of the Pacific and relegation of many of its nations to 'Small Island Developing States' (SIDS), is an explicit consequence of colonial-capitalism wherein it "was in the interest of imperialism – and is in the interest of neo-colonialism – to promote this blatant misconception of Melanesia," and we might add, the rest of the Pacific as well (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.33).

Indigenous cosmologies and precolonial realities across Oceania demonstrate the truth of regional interconnected relationalities. While Hau'ofa introduces the importance of reconceptualising Oceanic history in OSoI, he returns to this idea and develops it more comprehensively in his text "*Pasts to Remember*" [PtR] where he articulates a mandate for reconstructing and developing historical counter narratives to the 'realities' of enlightenment humanism which let white colonial academics "control and direct our discourses on our own affairs which is… potentially dangerous" (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.30). Dangerous in that through controlling and undermining Oceanic collective relationalities, through shortening Oceanic histories, relegating them to non-history, the theorists and defenders of these narratives "shorten very drastically the roots of their [Oceanic] culture or even declare their existence doubtful" (Hau'ofa, 2008, p. 63). Through these colonial narratives Indigenous precolonial histories across Oceania have been undermined and relegated to a pre-history, beyond the territory of rational inquiry and universal reason, beyond the logics of enlightenment humanism. Against these, and in the face of decades of cultural erasure and undermining, Hau'ofa contends that the flexible nature with which narrative and its lessons are translated and applied across Oceania, the fluid and autonomous nature within which knowledge and story can function, presents us with the possibility of rethinking and reconceptualising Oceanic relationality and notions of self.

Hau'ofa (2008) examines what he describes as "ideas for getting the ball rolling" for the task of overcoming the colonial-capitalist narratives whose histories diminish our people

and erase our realities. (p.64) The suggestions Hau'ofa offers function as the building blocks of the narratives and theories which he hopes will aid in the struggle to develop a new Oceania, an Oceania which strikes at the very structures of the house of modernity, overturning the legacies of colonial-capitalism and gesturing towards new forms of regional and collective forms of relationality. Critically, the first path Hau'ofa proposes forward into a possible new Oceania is explicitly articulated through the rethinking and reintegration of understandings of the past, an overturning of the colonial narratives which erase Oceanic histories by "delineating a new temporal dimension of history by doing away with the division of the past in which most of it lies outside history." (2008, p.64). Here Oceania challenges the logics of separability, enlightenment-humanism, and the nation-state by proposing to not only overturn the historical notions of progress and development which foster Eurocentric narratives but also to rupture the very logic and reasoning, the criteria for evidence and truth, which underpins this order. In going beyond the colonial narrative, Hau'ofa suggests that these new histories "must resort very seriously to… ecologically based oral narratives" (2008, p.64). In this, he appeals to the interventions of 'Okusitino Māhina (1992) whose doctoral thesis demonstrated how Tongan *tala-e-fonua* operates as a form of environmentally centred articulation of history and relationality embedded in and passed down through oral traditions. In asserting the validity of these methodologies in reconstructing and reclaiming our histories from the narratives of colonial-capitalism, of modernity, Hau'ofa suggests that one of the most important things we can do in these retellings is to "bring to centre stage grassroots resistance and other unnoticed but important events for our peoples… refocus[ing] our historical reconstructions on them and their doings" (2008, p.64). By recentring ourselves in our historical narratives, by reclaiming our truths and methods, particularly when teaching the next generation of Oceanic scholars, we challenge and oppose these logics.

Hau'ofa pushes this reconfiguration of histories even further through his emphasis of 'ecological time' as a fundamental collapsing of the spatio-temporal basis upon which colonial-capitalist narratives are established. Hau'ofa identifies ecological time as a non-linear, circular, or spiralling conceptualisation of time which constantly mediates and fluctuates between past, present, and future as its means of navigating its environments. Hau'ofa's emphasises the importance of ecological time as "where time is circular, it does not exist independently of the natural surroundings and society." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.67) This

being “a universal phenomenon stressed variously by different cultures” across Oceania. (Hau’ofa, 2008, p.67). Hau’ofa identifies ecological time as a significant component of Oceanic understanding, tracing its persistence across Hawaiian, Fijian, and Tongan notions of time and space, embedded within their languages, wherein “the conception of the past as ahead or in front of us is not a mere linguistic construction. It has an actual historical basis in the documentation of our oral narratives on our landscapes.” (Hau’ofa, 2008, p.66). This form of temporal relationality, in which the material realities of our landscapes and environments in front of us in the present hold histories and truths passed on for generations guiding us into the future, is critical in the struggle against colonial-capitalism. Ecological time – collapsing the divisions between past, present, and future mobilised by modernity to negate differences and structure their socio-cultural hierarchies – affirms a possibility of relating to and inhabiting a space and time which sits outside the Stein et al.’s (2017) house of modernity, a relationality which challenges the boxhead subjectivity that has come to characterise modernity.

However, Hau’ofa acknowledges that much of our histories, even our oral traditions which preserve as much as they can of Oceanian history, are incomplete. He thus calls on the Pacific to “devise other methods, based on different perspectives of history, to reconstruct our such pasts to suit our purposes… maintaining the depths of our roots and strengthening our autonomous identities.” (Hau’ofa, 2008, p.68). Hau’ofa’s organising principle and imperative for devising historical and future notions of Oceania, notions which expand the understandings of self-worth and value held by our students, is re-established as the criteria through which we must come to think a new Oceania. Hau’ofa reminds us, we must “strengthen cultures of resistance…we must follow and resist the erosions, the despoliations and the exploitations that are going on in our region.” (Hau’ofa, 2008, p.76) The struggle for a new Oceania is one which radically stands against the very foundations of the house of modernity and its ontological fantasies, it is a struggle for a collective Oceania which through reclaiming its history simultaneously rewrites its future, gesturing towards new ways of organising and configuring our collective sense of self. It is the positing of a world which serves to erupt from and rend apart a modernity that relies on an inherently false appeal to universal reason and absolute division to justify its violence.

In this respect, this thesis reiterates Hau’ofa’s call to a collective Oceania, and the Oceania tradition, asserting that the only way forward for Oceania is through a newfound

collective Oceanic relationality. This is critical to our survival as the peoples of Oceania in the face of escalating existential threats and a struggling, if not dying, world-system. For a collective Oceania this thesis engages a more radically anti-capitalist and anti-colonial reading of Hau'ofa's call, exploring what it is not, what it might be, and how Oceania might begin to understand itself. It has done this by linking Hau'ofa's analyses to his contexts, framing his essays and papers against certain broader geopolitical shifts throughout the Pacific. In this it recognises the ways in which our struggles and narratives for a new Oceania also have to reflect our contexts, and asks what the prospect of Oceania offers us today as we face an increasingly dire future. What and how this message of collective Oceanic relationality holds hope while recognising its realities. This is particularly important in relation to the ways in which modernity and its logics have functioned to deny radical calls to a new collective Oceania and deny Oceanic relationalities which differ from the ontological fantasies and failures of modernity. As such, this chapter has articulated a reading of Hau'ofa which seeks to invoke a more radical struggle against the structures of the very world, to strengthen Hau'ofa's call and to bring the question of a new Oceania into our particular moment. This thesis now turns to interrogate water and Blackness as sites of onto-epistemic violence and denial, where the modernity's relationalities, aqua nullius, and white supremacy, define what Oceania is not.

It does this by examining how modernity's logics and relationalities have been naturalised as part of a hegemonic order of colonial-capitalism, particularly in relation to these two sites of being, an order which is structurally opposed to Oceania. In the following section this takes the form of an analysis of water and its ontological denial as aqua nullius under modernity, exploring how colonial-capitalist water relations are metaphysically opposed to a new Oceania. In the third section this takes the form of an analysis of Blackness and anti-Blackness as a condition of modernity which divides Oceania against itself and prevents us from moving together. As such, what is overarchingly critical in Hau'ofa's attempts to reconfigure the spatio-temporal framings of Oceania, is the centrality of the navigation of difference and multiplicity between and across our interconnected communities.

2. Multiplicity and Politics

I-Kiribati scholar Teresia Teaiwa in her 2014 essay 'The Ancestors We Get to Choose' presents a reflection on "the implications of being influenced by white theorists" by offering a genealogy of said theorists and their roles in shifting her thought (p.45). In this, Teaiwa's honesty in navigating her relationship with white theory and theorists functions both as a means of honouring and drawing recognition to those important relationships, but also, as a means of disclosing her biases and blind spots, a means of being honest and self-reflective about who and how she as the author approaches her piece. For Teaiwa (2014) theory is best thought of as a tool through which we encounter, link, and describe the world in its multiplicity, it is the sharing and valuing of ideas, connections, and contradictions. She prefers "to see and use theory as a frame, a magnifying glass, a key, a plow, a sail, an oar… it can get you where you want to go faster." (p.46). I also draw on hooks (1994) and her assertion of both the value of theory as "a place where I could imagine possible futures… where life could be lived differently" and the recognition "that theory could be a healing place" (p.61). As a tool, a means by which we come to articulate encounter the world, theory can offer us paths forward through clearer understandings of the world and its power functions. Perhaps more importantly however, theory holds within it tools to think and imagine new worlds, new ways of being. To understand the world, but to use that understanding to invoke new ones, to hold hope in the face of its realities and strive towards these possibilities. In this respect, hooks (1994) reminds us that "theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorising towards this end." (p.61) At its heart, theory necessitates a decision, a decision to examine this reality, these structures and violences the world imposes and to reject them as the only way things can be, a decision to hope, to understand and to try and change it.

Theory is understood to be healing, liberatory, and revolutionary when it looks to move beyond this world. Andreotti et al.'s (2015) social cartography of responses to modernity organises these responses into three categories: the soft-reform space, the radical-reform space, and the beyond-reform space. The beyond-reform space adopts a palliative approach to the world recognising fundamental ontological, cosmological, and epistemological antagonisms with Indigenous and decolonial world views. The beyond-reform space asserts in these antagonisms a structural antagonism which necessitates a new

world and strives to both build the relationalities which this new world might invite, with which we might begin to move together, as well as movements which facilitate the death of the current world. Theory is applied here in the interests of decolonisation and the decolonial project, wherein by decolonisation it means the beyond-reform space, recognising the realities of ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical violences as constitutive of modernity, and thus looking beyond. Throughout this thesis, theory, for its capacity to accurately represent the social relations of capital and its operations, strengthening the project of decolonisation. Its capacities for hope, for recognising the fragility of power, are truly realised when balanced with a grounding in material and empirical analysis. Theory and analysis while perhaps important in and of themselves, will stagnate in Oceania and Indigenous world views if all they offer us are academic frameworks and languages to better state our complaints. For a new Oceania, by which is meant the decolonisation of the Pacific, theory is applied for its ability to better understand, and through understanding, change, the world. This is also, I think, precisely what Wendt (1976) appeals to in his assertion that "Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the imagination in free flight can hope – if not to contain her – to grasp some of her shape, plumage, and pain." (p.49). To strive towards a new Oceania the theories applied here are engaged for their capacity to bear witness to the brutal reality of modernity, and to turn away from this reality towards Oceania, the prospect of a new world, a new way of being.

Central to my utilisation of theory throughout this thesis has been my undergraduate and postgraduate studies as a philosophy major. In fact, I had first approached the possibility of a PhD within the philosophy department, however, I struggled to find a supervisor who would explicitly engage with Black and Indigenous Oceanian philosophy and theory. Instead, I turned to sociology and critical theory as relatively open spaces where an interrogation of Black and Indigenous philosophy was encouraged. However, while I may have 'left' the philosophy department formally, I still also bring it with me as I move through the world. I have been indelibly influenced by critical theory. As such, to claim that they are not a part of my work still would be insincere and would also dismiss the not insignificant amount of study I had done in these areas. Further, I am both Pākehā and Papuan. To deny my whiteness and white influences completely would be to deny a fundamental aspect of myself, to deny my father and Pākehā relationality.

Teaiwa (2014) explicitly discusses the paradoxical nature of walking between these worlds, between our Indigenous theorists and scholars and the white influences we will not and cannot deny. In her tracing of the genealogies of her study and thought, choosing to name the influences from both white and non-white traditions, Teaiwa calls us to be a little more honest about our histories, our influences, to simultaneously appreciate our white influences, to recognise their significance, but also to account for their limitations and explore how we have gone beyond these limitations through our own theorists. Similarly, Cree scholar Cash Ahenakew (2016), drawing on Andreotti's (2016, p.338) boxhead cartography, highlights the importance of interrogating and "historicising the referents that circumscribe Western frameworks of reasoning so we can recognise these referents in our researcher-selves". In this respect, Ahenakew reminds us that by being honest about these influences, we can better identify how they continue to operate through our work, how they might be shaping our thinking at a given point and what moving beyond them might reveal for us going forward. I have, as such, not hesitated to state the role of Rancière in my work. In Rancière, I encountered a theorist whom I 'felt' and experienced his arguments, as well as understood them, someone whose work resonated with me. He is a white collaborator and thinker I get to choose. A theorist whose theory has helped make sense of my realities as an activist and who has helped provide frameworks for imagining new futures and the struggle to bring them about.

Being and the World

In this respect preliminary accounts of ontology, chance and 'the subject' are examined to facilitate the nature of Rancière's intervention, as well as providing a common language and framing for how 'ontology' 'the world' and 'the subject' as terms are generally applied in this thesis. This is done to specify precisely what is at stake in the question of political agency and the capacity to enact change in the world, to provide an analysis of how power under colonial-capitalism functions to maintain its order. Engaging the question of being through Heidegger who asserts that being is in the world in such a way that it is mediated by a form of care or caring, and that it is 'thrown' into the world. One always already finds themselves in the world, thrown into a specific spatio-temporal, ontological and metaphysical order. Care is part of the nature being as it is precisely the mechanism by which being-in *is*, as being is concerned with, or cares for the nature of its being. Care "determines the fundamental mode of this being according to which it is delivered over (thrownness) to

the world taken care of" (Heidegger, 2010, p.192). It is a "primordial structural totality" that always already exists *a priori* to any way in which being is and so conditions the thrownness of being, as part of the already thereness of the world (p. 187).

If being is always already thrown into its relationality and the world it relates to, yet is called to embrace its freedom and authentically dwell and be at home in the world, what is to be done if this world, its worldliness, and relationality are structurally opposed to a new Oceania, a new world necessary to a way of being in which all of Oceania can be 'at home.' What if ontologically, in the very framing of the world and its relationality, there was a structural opposition to the prospect of a new Oceania invited by Hau'ofa, Wendt, and the Oceanic tradition? Here, I reassert colonial-capitalism as the name for this world, its world-system, and examine its form of relationalities or frames of care, through Stein et al.'s notions of separability, enlightenment humanism, nation-state, and global-capitalism (2017). Where thrownness entangles being-in-the-world, binding it to the limited frames of care of modernity and its logics, it also demonstrates in this its inherent fragility and transience. It is colonial-capitalism into which our being, our ontological experience of the world today, is thrown. Thrownness and the freedom derived from care for the world and being's being, however, suggests that this need not be the case, that it is not *the* necessary condition of being but a form this relation embodies in its worldliness. Here, Heidegger provides us with a framework for conceptualising the links between ontology via being, and the world in which being-in is. As a condition of being though, I recall Althusser's (2006) assertion that Heidegger's thrownness as a notion, contains within it elements of an aleatory materialism, a recognition that at its most fundamental a primordial element of chance or its effect conditions the nature of being and the world at any given point.

Althusser's (2006) account of aleatory materialism introduces the material reality of chance, a materiality of the 'encounter' which effects the nature of being and the world. He does this by first drawing on Epicurus' depiction of the primordial condition of existence as an infinite rain of atoms falling in a void (p.167). For Epicurus, the world is brought into its being via the clinamen, a swerve, an encounter, a chance meeting of the infinite rain of falling atomistic particulars. Here, chance is not conceptualised numerically in the sense that it might be expressed as a percentage, as the possibility, or probability of a chain of events through predictions and projections. It is neither 'directional' nor unfolding. In its adjacency to the infinite and the void, chance is understood in relation to its intrinsically indeterminate

nature, its voidal capacity to both rupture as well as determine worlds in its consequence. Similarly, chance is not the product of a particular environment or situation, the cumulative result of a repeated procedure, it is the breaking of an environment or situation through its indeterminacy. In this way it cannot be predicted, nor accounted for, it is not of *the* world, but rather is the material nature of *worlds*, to be structured in relation to and thus capable of being broken through by an aleatory rupture, an encounter. Althusser asserts that it is thus through the already given, the 'there is' of the world, and as such the thrownness of being into the given world, which relates to this element of chance, where "we find in Heidegger a long series of developments centred on the expressions *es gibt* – 'there is', 'this is what is given' – that converge with Epicurus' inspiration." (p.170) The presupposition of the there-is of the world then "restores a kind of transcendental contingency of the world, into which we are thrown, and of the meaning of the world." (p.170). Chance underpins being and the world in that the world is structured by moments and encounters, instances in which the there-is is and has been reconfigured.

In this, the encounter or swerve, the momentary rupture of chance within a situation is only intelligible in its consequence, not its occurrence. Take for example, a current understanding of the beginning of the universe, the notion of a 'big bang' which set all existence in motion. While the conditions which gave rise to and conditioned its occurrence are fundamentally unknowable, what is known is its consequence, the aftermath of its occurrence. That is, one cannot *know* how and why an encounter or swerve has taken place, rather, in the case of an encounter, one is left to navigate its consequences, to try and make sense of and understand its occurrence. For Heidegger, this is expressed through the notion of 'crystallisation' wherein being's thrownness into the world is reconfigured in relation to an encounter with another innerworldly being, being-together. An encounter which reshapes the world and the care of Dasein's being-in in the aftermath of its occurrence. However, in Heidegger's conceptualisation, Dasein, thrownness, the encounter, and its world, while not solipsistic are interrogated devoid of a judgment concerning the world as such, instead phenomenologically moving to describe it in general, in its experience. Beyond a critique of the increased 'technologising' and withdrawal from the world, which, he asserts, divides or withdraws being from the world giving rise to inauthentic being, Heidegger does not explicitly express a politic or position on the world in its thrownness, the facticity of the world.

As such, the understanding of the nature of being, of ontology and how being is in the world in this thesis, moves beyond Heidegger's notion of being in its approach to consider how for Oceania as a world and Oceanic being, there are structural, ontological, cosmological, and epistemological barriers under modernity which are intrinsically opposed to Oceania's possibility. Through Althusser's tracing of the tradition of the philosophy of the encounter, it is demonstrated that ontologically, the world and its way of being are both continually underpinned by an aleatory materialism, an account of this operation of chance. Consequently, in the thrownness of the world lies the possibility of its reconfiguration and rupture by the chance of the encounter. In relation to power and the ordering of the world then, an aleatory materialism reflects an understanding of the contingent nature of its order, and the possibility of its disruption at any given point. In this way, while the world-system of colonial-capitalism *is* the world à la Wallerstein (1975), the material nature of reality is such that chance has the capacity to permeate and rupture all logics and systems of ordering. Thus, aleatory encounters, the unknowable and unpredictable moments of chance which are inherent in the there-is of the world as part of its material reality, embed within the world the possibility of its reconfiguration and the reconfiguration of being's being-in.

As a consequence of its voidal and thus indeterminate nature, we are neither able to predict, nor necessarily know whether or not an encounter, a swerve, has taken place. For Badiou (2009), this necessitates an element of fidelity or faithfulness to the prospect that an encounter has taken place, that a rupture in the world has presented itself. This way of being, which is faithful to the occurrence of an encounter – what he names an 'event' – asserting the truth and reality of its occurrence and its possible reconfiguration of the world, is what Badiou refers to as the 'subject.' In this, ontology is not simply the phenomenological description of the world, rather it is something enacted, ontology as the "axiom system of the particular inconsistency of multiplicities… deconstructs any one-effect; it is faithful to the non-being of the one" such that ontology is "none other than the absolute form of presentation, thus the mode in which being proposes itself to any access." (Badiou, 2006, p.33) Here, Badiou demonstrates that in the world, being is not a given, that ontology is not the general state of being, but constitutes a way of being in the world. In this though, Badiou grounds his analysis in mathematical and Hegelian traditions which, through their adherence to a blind multiplicity and matheme, obscures the particularities of difference, of relationality as structuring multiplicity to a degree. As such he contends "It would be absurd to think that

there is an intrinsic link between a given multiple and a given world" on the basis that both worlds and being are infinite in their multiplicity (Badiou, 2009, p.114).

While we can perhaps concede there is no *intrinsic* link, though our genealogies might disagree, I think there are historical and possible ways of being which emphasise more fundamental relations to particular worlds and sites of being. That is, multiplicities which have stronger relationships to each other, which congregate around certain relational formations, as well as in the case of Black ontology explored in section three, antithetical relations, or ~~beings~~ whose explicit structural negation are prerequisites for the being-in of colonial-capitalism. Overarchingly for Badiou though, the question of the 'subject' and 'subjectivation' demonstrates a tension insofar as a subject is always the subject of an encounter, a moment of rupture, a subject in relation to the event which reconfigures and ruptures the world. The subject is, through this tension, the being (structure) which through the process of subjectivisation/subjectivation (act), encounters an event which demonstrates a truth of the essential inconsistency of the world and holds fidelity to the truth it demonstrates, to the world it invites.

The world of colonial-capitalism then, is one into which being in modernity is thrown. For Heidegger, elements of a philosophy of the encounter underpin his move away from metaphysics, where a materialism of chance, of the aleatory, comes to structure his account of being. Through its presupposition of the there-is, the already thereness of the world, being, and its consequent thrownness, an element of chance and indeterminacy structures being as well as threatens to destabilise the world. Through Althusser's aleatory materialism the nature of this indeterminacy and its manifestation in encounters is one which is, by its nature, structured by the void. Through the void, and the pure chance of the aleatory as part of the structure of being, the question of ontology is not closed, but remains open. Here, Badiou (2006) introduces the role of fidelity or faithfulness to an event as the necessary condition through which a being becomes a subject. That is, the subject is realised in its fidelity to, recognition, and assertion of the occurrence of an event. Fidelity to the reality that the event demonstrates a structural conflict with the count of the world as one. In this way, the question of being in the world is not a given, the subject comes to be through a process, a truth procedure, through its fidelity to an event, hence the use of the term subjectivisation as the process of becoming a subject. Amongst these conceptualisations of ontology, the world, and the subject, Rancière introduces a critical framing for how the current world, how colonial-

capitalism functions to disarm and inhibit the prospect of resistance through the operations of policing.

Rancière

As I noted earlier, the work of Jacques Rancière has played a pivotal role in shaping my intellectual and activist endeavours. While my master's thesis focused specifically on the role of chance or the aleatory underpinning 'the subject' and the process of 'subjectivisation' in Rancière's accounts of politics and emancipation, I had already begun to experiment with and test his theories through political interventions and protests in my undergraduate years. At its most fundamental, Rancière's (2010, p.36) work is underpinned by a constant search for what he describes as "partitions of the sensible" and a rethinking of the question of the nature of politics and political theory itself. These partitions Rancière (2010) argues, are demonstrated in political and aesthetic situations in which there are contestations, not between opposing sides, but between those whose calls are counted as being capable of experiencing oppression and those whose calls to acknowledge their oppression are denied, negated, and repudiated from the outset. What Rancière asserts is that the question of the nature of politics and political theory is one grounded in the navigation of dispute or disagreement, but that this is not between competing parties. In this, Rancière is clear that, contra modern political theorists such as Habermas, and Arendt, politics is not about the functions and operations of power as such. Rather, that the critical disagreement concerns the demarcation of politics itself, that politics is an act which brings this disagreement to the forefront.

To articulate this, Rancière, drawing on Aristotle, identifies politics as being grounded in the division of speech acts into the categories of *logos* or rational, expressive speech - and *phonê* – animalistic cries of pain or pleasure, incapable of holding thought. However, it is not simply this distinction which gives rise to politics. The modern 'vulgar' rendering of political disagreement in the traditions of Arendt and Habermas for example, are concerned with the mediation and assigning of *logos* and *phonê*, where competing parties engage in discourse in a 'public sphere' or 'public realm' to ensure their respective voices are being heard, that their *logos* is being understood and their interests recognised, and consensus reached. In this, the supposition of a public sphere or realm 'proper' to politics, is engaged to distinguish between expressions of *logos* or *phonê*, where the private realm, of life and living, the realm of *phonê* is divided from the public sphere, the realm of discourse and politics, the realm of *logos*.

Rancière (2004, p.298) contends that for Arendt, "the political sphere as a specific sphere, [is] separated from the realm of necessity." Keeping this separation allows for politics 'proper' to take place. Here "the boundary between the political and the domestic becomes the boundary between the political and the social." (Rancière, 2010, p.28) For Arendt and Habermas, the primary concern of politics is ensuring that each political issue is assigned to the correct sphere, and engaged with under the appropriate banner of pluralistic representation, allowing politics to retain its purity. From this however, Rancière (2010 p.28) notes the "purification of the political, freed from domestic and social necessity, is tantamount to the pure and simple reduction of the political to the state." That is, this understanding of politics can only conceptualise politics and political acts as being structured in relation to the administration and reproduction of the state.

The goal of political theory derived from this conceptualisation of politics is to ensure that the realm of *logos* is protected against intrusions, that it is not tainted by the private realm and private interests, by *phonê*. This is ensured through the assertion that individuals who comprise the 'whole' or 'the people' are democratically represented and accounted for, exercising their right to engage in the public sphere if they so choose under a supposed principle of pluralistic and liberal equality where they are free to express their *logos*. This definition of politics presumes the possibility of an 'end of politics' or and 'end of history' à la Fukuyama (1992) in which all parts and possibilities, all the different multiplicities which constitute the world are accounted for and represented. A politics in which the 'public sphere' functions to allow for the challenging of violences and disagreements through according them their specific place and time, their order, asserts the possibility of a situation in which the pluralistic rule of democratic 'equality,' need only recognise and account for oppositions and contestations, measured through logics of equivalence. The consequent solution to this situation lies in a cumulative redefining, an incessant progression of reconfigurations and balancing of interests towards this supposed end. Rancière however, argues that the binary opposition of *logos* to *phonê* does not truly encompass the nature of politics, and in fact works to obscure and deny the more persistent and more fundamental disagreement and division, the *a priori* division between those who can even possess *logos* and those who can only ever express *phonê*. Those who 'count', and those who do not, or cannot, count. The initial 'wrong' or fundamental disagreement at the heart of the question of politics, Rancière argues, consists in the *a priori* denial inherent in any attempt to 'count' – the denial of the

partitioning, of a miscount. Thus, the very assertion of a mass of people who constitute a population, 'the people'/ 'the count' contains within it a structural and unresolvable indeterminacy.

It is only ever then *a* count, not *the* Count, as this structural indeterminacy precludes any possibility of a capital 'C' Count. Rancière argues that this is the inherent nature of 'counting' which comprises the actual functions of the vast majority of modern governments and international institutions of the world – endless disputes over what does and does not *count* as or constitute the 'political.' It is this very act of counting which is the opposite of politics, what he names instead the police, or policing. He asserts that "the police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying" (Rancière, 2009, p.28) ascribing to these bodies and ways of being, particular forms and functions, particular ways in which they can or cannot partake in the order. The police then "is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise." (Rancière, 1999, p.29) It determines who and how one can partake, engage with the *arkhê* – the "theoretical principle entailing a clear distribution of positions and capacities, grounding the distribution of power between rulers and ruled." (Ibid.) This is why the nature of the 'citizen' is always in contestation and seemingly undermined by its many 'parts' in the modern political order; the question of partaking is always an open one, but one policed and denied. Drawing on Aristotle's definition of the nature of the citizen as determined by their participation in the *arkhê*, their 'partaking' in ruling and being ruled, Rancière contends that this ordering requires the constant assertion of the supposedly nonpolitical nature of any possible disagreement, that it justifies itself through an appeal to consensus.

The critical issue here, is that the power to partake in ruling is structured on an underlying presupposition of who and how one can participate in ruling, of who and what one's partaking looks like from the outset. Aristotle's criteria for the *arkhê* for partaking in ruling is defined across three classes – the criteria for aristocratic rule (*aristoi*), which seemingly lies in 'virtue,' oligarchic rule (*oligoi*), which lies in the possession of 'wealth,' and democratic rule (*demos*), which lies in the 'freedom' of the masses. However, in Aristotle's formula, the freedom which the demos/the people have access to is the freedom to do only one thing – "stay silent and submit." (Rancière, 2010, p.30). This is the fundamental nature of the police, an ordering which imposes the freedom only for submission and silence.

The Aristotelian account here assigns to the *demos*/democracy the right and freedom only to submit to the other forms of rule; to be constrained to an ever contested middle ground which serves only to exclude actual partaking.

In Althusser's account of political subjectivation he describes how the state determines individuals and creates subjects by 'hailing' them in social acts and institutions. He gives the example of a police officer who interpellates a subject, recruiting or subsuming them under the ideological state apparatus by hailing them – an agent of the state stopping someone "Hey, you there!" (Rancière, 2010, p.37). These acts of interpellation function then to ultimately condition the nature by which one can partake, to determine one's role as the *demos*, as those who must stay silent and submit. Rancière's account of the police and function of the state, however, reserves the term of the 'police' for the operations by which, instead of hailing individuals, the state denies that any act could be political, could contain within it the possibility of a miscount or rupture, it commands instead: "Move along! There's nothing to see here!" (Ibid., p.37). In this, the function of the police is to deny the possibility that the ordering or count of the state could contain within it an error, a violence. It denies the possibility that there is a disagreement at its foundation. Obscuring the reality that its consensus, in which the pluralistic parts are 'counted' and measured across a logic of equivalences, is a false consensus. The police as an operation thus moves to deny politics, to deny disagreement in the service of a fundamentally broken count, a false consensus where "consensus democracy… is, strictly speaking, the conjunction of contradictory terms" (Rancière, 1999, p. 95)

Rancière turns to Plato's seven criteria for rule as a means of responding to the Aristotelian formulation of the question of democracy and politics. Plato's seventh criteria, which is Plato's account of the *demos*, locates a different form of freedom embedded within its logic, namely the right to rule or exercise of authority determined by the "'the choice of God'… the 'drawing of lots.'" (Rancière, 2010, p.31) In the 'drawing of lots' lies the underlying nature of the criteria; that in the Platonic conceptualisation of democracy, the rule of the *demos* exercises the right to rule of those for whom there is no right, no criteria to rule. This is Rancière's (2010) Fourth Thesis on Politics, namely that "Democracy is not a political regime. As a rupture in the logic of the *arkhê*… it is the very regime of politics itself as a form of relationship that defines a specific subject." (p.31) In this, Rancière defines politics *as* democracy in operation, as the moment in which a new subject is constituted, the rupturing

of an ordering of the indeterminable multiplicity which constitutes the people. Rather than the mundane administration of the world through operations of consensus and policing, Rancière (1999, p.29) asserts that politics is "an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing."

Politics only occurs in the moments in which the logics of the *arkhê*, the police 'orders' of our world, are broken, when what was preciously rendered imperceptible demands that it is. This, he argues, constitutes the true function and nature of democracy, a rupture in and breaking of the count which in doing so produces a particular subject. Against the "there is nothing to see here" of the police, politics is the democratic assertion of a miscount, this demonstration is established on a principle of equality insofar as the partaking of the *demos* is founded on the absence of a condition to partake and demand a politics, a disagreement. Politics asserts "there is something to see here, there is a politics, a disagreement here" that there is 'dissensus.' The capacity to be a subject for Rancière is established in the moments in which one's actions rupture the logics of the police, in which the miscounted part, the 'part' which is determined to have 'no part' in the count, asserts and imposes its existence breaking the logic of the count. He concludes then that the "distinguishing feature of politics is the existence of a subject who 'rules' by the very fact of having no qualifications to rule; that the principle of… ruling is irremediably divided as a result of this." (Rancière, 2010, p.40).

What then does this practically look like? Through occupations, riots, marches, and protests, claims of a fundamental wrong with modernity, with the count of colonial-capitalism, are subsumed and reinterpreted by the police order which reduces political claims to disputes over personal interests or nonissues. Assertions of a dissensus, a miscount then are reframed by the various operations of the police order to deny from the outset, their capacity for politics. This is seen when, through the media and the rhetoric of politicians, their responses to protests against militarisation, protests in the struggle for queer rights, for housing and economic rights, Indigenous land disputes, for Black Lives Matter. In these moments of political rupture and resurgence claims of a more fundamental dispute with the very onto-epistemic order of the world are reduced to questions and disputes over allotment or reduced to nonissues. 'Policed' in both the outright militant sense and in that the disagreement in the order of being which is expressed in resistance is denied. Assertions that those protesting only want more of the figurative pie of social goods, that they were being greedy, or, that the protests and riots were nonissues – that those protesting were simply part

of a 'rent-a-crowd,' are 'paid protestors,' or 'antifa thugs' function to deny the possibility of a disagreement, deny the possibility that there is a dispute over the count. In all of these instances the police order moves to reframe and delegitimise any and all forms of resistance and opposition, denying the possibility that there could be an error in the count, that there could be dissensus. The police order functions to systematically oppose the possibility that there is an actual politics, a dispute, a dissensus, and that the disagreement might concern the count itself, rather than its distribution. Rancière's definition of politics is also one which is underpinned by a notion of an-arkhê or anarchy insofar as it constitutes a rejection of the logic of the 'arkhê,'from the outset. That is, for Rancière, there is no end point to politics as such, to the staging of disagreement concerning the count. This is precisely because it is the very act of counting which invariably produces a miscount, it is the nature of counting, of trying to impose order on the indeterminate mass, the multiplicity which constitutes the people, to necessarily fail.

For those of us committed to social justice and emancipation Rancière's analysis calls for a vigilant critique of the structures of the police order. Given the necessary but always broken attempts to count and order the population, rather than conceptualising 'better' or more accurate counts, the function of political theory is to interrogate, understand, and break counts and miscounts. Rancière encourages a constant search for what he refers to as 'partitions of the sensible' (*partage du sensible*), a search for moments in which the disputes or disagreements underpinning a particular conflict demonstrate that the issue is not between parts of the count but instead constitute a disagreement with the very order itself, with the police. These partitions represent moments in which that which was not supposed to be a part of the count and order of the world, demonstrates that it is. Rancière (2010) uses the example of Olympe de Gouges, a political figure and activist during the French Revolution to articulate how dissensus take places. During the period of significant political and social upheaval that constituted the French Revolution, the situation of women's representation in the political order was called into question by de Gouges. This was because, under the republican emphasis of universal values, citizenship was not granted to women on the grounds that their actions, their activities, and participation in the social order was concerned with the "particularity of domestic life." (p.57) Because their lives were concerned with the particular, with 'bare-life,' it was held that they could not engage with the 'universality' of republican political life and its dealings with the abstract principles of state administration.

Against this count, this order which precluded her from being counted as a political being, as having *logos*, de Gouges in her 1791 *Declaration of the Rights of Women* asserts that because a "woman has the right to mount the scaffold, so she should have the right equally to mount the rostrum." That is, if women could die for the revolution, if they could mount the scaffold and be hung for their participation in the revolution, then they had as equal a right to participation in the political assembly. This disruption of 'the count' was not to be solved through incorporating women into the order, but by reconfiguring the logic which sought to discount women from the vote in the first place. In staking this claim de Gouges demonstrated that "on the scaffold everyone was equal… the universality of the death sentence undermined the 'self-evident' distinction between political life and domestic life." (Rancière, 2010. p.57) The logic of the count which served to deny the possibility of politics and the participation of women in the political order was fundamentally ruptured by their protests and by their capacity to die upon the scaffold. That is, by enacting the political capacity that it was claimed they did not have they demonstrated they had these rights they did not have by their partaking, irrespective of whether or not their capacity to partake was recognised. Politics is thus the breaking of the police order through a demonstration that a subset of the population does have the rights that the police order denies that there has been a miscount disrupting the logic of the count itself.

Rancière's analyses thus underpin the conceptualisation of politics and rights which structure this thesis. Moving through analyses of legal and ontological representations of water and the oceans to questions concerning the Black ontological condition, this thesis engages in a search for partitions of the sensible, for instances in which the police order operates to deny the possibility of disagreement. Further, Rancière's application of his analytical framework to a consideration of the 'Rights of Man' (Human Rights) has come to inform how this thesis relates to law, from both an international and a domestic perspective. His account of the problem with modern human rights is structured in response to the post-Cold War period and the 'return to politics' – the movement to a supposed "peaceful posthistorical world where global democracy would match the global market of liberal economy." (Rancière, 2004, p.297) He notes however, that this moment never eventuated. As the 21st Century has demonstrated, this order of supposed rights and liberal freedoms has instead given rise to a situation in which Human Rights have become "the rights of the victims, the rights of those who were unable to enact any rights." (Rancière, 2004, p.298)

Human Rights are thus only ever asserted as the rights of those who do not have rights, in instances in which these rights are not recognised. Consequently, the modern order results in situations in which these 'rights' are then upheld by others opening the possibility of a "new right to 'humanitarian interference' – which ultimately boiled down to the right to invasion." (Ibid, p.298). The modern response to this question is critically established on the Arendtian distinctions between bare or necessary life and political life. The supposition of a framework of universal human rights, was forced to contend with the prospect that these rights were "mere abstraction because the only real rights were the rights of the citizens, the rights attached to a national community as such." (Ibid, p.298). Against this, Arendt's distinction between bare life and political life opened a reformulation of the problem by asserting that human rights are "the rights of those who are only human beings, who have no more property left than the property of being a human being… they are the rights of those who have no rights." (Ibid, p.298). Rancière argues that her rendering of this issue in these terms is what allows her to define the exceptional nature of the rights which belong to the rightless as the rights of those whose "plight is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them; not that they are oppressed, but that nobody wants to oppress them." (Ibid, p.299). This callous assertion of the nature of the rightless obscures the more significant recognition of the manoeuvre in which the exceptional state of the rightless is defined as being 'beyond oppression' which essentially leads to a depoliticising of this oppression, noting that in reality there are laws and motivations which structured and produced these oppressive structures.

Rancière (Ibid, p.302) takes the concept of exceptionality a step further however, asserting that "the Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not." In this, the rights of man do not belong to, or reflect the rights of particular individuals or subjects, rather, what Rancière's claim here appeals to is that the 'rights of man' instead refers to the particular process of subjectivization (the becoming of a subject) which mediates two ways of understanding these rights. In the first instance, rather than a pure abstraction, the rights are inscribed or written, they have a material representation which assigns to the 'people' a principle of equality "they are inscriptions of the community as free and equal." (Ibid, p.302) On the other hand, they are the rights of those "who make something of that inscription." (Ibid, p.303). In this respect, to assert one does not have the rights that they have, or has the rights that they do not have, is to

draw out the reality of these two ways of operationalising these rights. In some instances, there are inscribed rights, through procedures such as the universal declaration of human rights which recognise freedom and equality which a community supposedly has, but does not actually have. As this thesis will explore in its Koreri section, West Papua and the consequent ontological condition of Black Oceania, demonstrates precisely a context where West Papuans, as human beings who seemingly have a claim to these declarations of universal human and Indigenous peoples' rights are fundamentally denied the possibility of enacting those rights in the police order of the world, in modernity, postponing and obscuring the possibility of a disagreement, of a conflict, of a genocide. They are also the rights of those who make something of the inscription, the rights of those who do not have these rights in reality, but assert that they do under the written declarations of equality and freedom. That is, these rights can only be enacted by a community who seemingly do not have these rights, but in enacting them, demonstrate that they do.

Through struggling to assert these rights, to assert freedom and equality and the universality of their humanity which entitles them to these rights, they are enacted, expressing that they have not been counted, that they belong to those who have been overlooked, miscounted, or discounted. In this, freedom and equality do not belong to a particular political subject, they are political predicates which "open up a dispute about what they entail and whom they concern in which cases." Recalling de Gouges' assertion that women had the right to participate in the assembly, we see that she is demonstrating that women do not have the rights to participate politically, but do because they can die on the scaffold, and thus have the rights that they do not, the right to partake. This staging of a disagreement, a dissensus around who and how a community counts under the inscriptions of the modern political order demonstrates both the nature of politics itself, but also, the ways in which the legal structures of modernity function to reify or impose the ontological and epistemological boundaries of the police order. As such, the denial of West Papuan claims to a separate Indigenous status to the Indonesian peoples, constitutes one of the ways in which western legal and ontological framings enforce consensus. These structures fundamentally allow for the false assertions of consensus.

It also opens an examination of what Rancière defines as the aesthetic nature of politics, wherein one of the key conditions of politics proper is the appearance and making oneself heard of a part perceived to have no part in the count. In this *logos*, the articulation of

political reason, and its potential to be disregarded as *phonê*, reflects a schema of interpretability, of perceptibility and sensibility which functions in accordance with these police structures to render certain parts of the community as imperceptible, as invisibilised. The 'partition the sensible' so policed renders potential disagreement apolitical. This is the true function of the police, to assert consensus and agreement by asserting that "there's nothing to see here" rendering these disagreements as nonpolitical. How then, are we to rupture the police logics of consensus, how are we to enact dissensus, to rupture the field of perceptibility and demonstrate the more critical issue at play, when the police continually functions to deny the prospect of disagreement? This structuring of the nature of political disagreement frames the analysis of a possible Oceanic community, of a collective Oceanic subjectivity which challenges the police order of colonial-capitalism. An order which would subsume us under the colonial logics of the nation-state, condemning us to the abyssal destruction of our lands, waters, and people in the interests of capital.

With this framing of the nature of politics and disagreement, the question of the dispute or disagreement raised by Hau'ofa against the counting and ordering of the Pacific which reduces our nations to islands in a far sea is examined. Asking what the prospect of a collective Oceanic identity might need going forward, and what needs to be overcome if Oceania is move together. Consequently, I contend that there are two onto-epistemic structures which inform the current police order and inhibit the possibility of the formation of a new Oceania. These being first, the colonial relation to water, and particularly the ocean as the site of a 'world,' a realm in which being can inhabit, and second, the denial of Black being, of Black ontological possibility explored through the context of West Papua and the broader Black Oceanic condition. These two operations of policing are utilised by modernity to impose structural and metaphysical boundaries preventing the formation of a collective political identity of Oceania asserting a consensus which is established on the wilful onto-epistemic denial of both Indigenous Oceanic relationality and Black life.

It is worth noting here that this thesis stretches Rancière's analyses slightly in that for the most part, he tends to avoid an explicit account of a possible ontological and metaphysical framing of subjectivization. That is, it recognises through Fanon (1963) the importance within Black and Indigenous context the importance of stretching Marx, of stretching theory, when engaging the question of race as a superstructure, as a structure which organises the contemporary police order, defining its specific ontological nature. Rancière avoids an

account of ontology specifically to distance himself from political philosophy in general, but also forms of political theory and philosophy which attempt to inscribe a framing of politics, a particular arkhê, an order grounded in the very nature of our 'Being.' Doing so would open up the possibility of a type of consensus grounded in a specific ontological or metaphysical 'reality' denying difference and disagreement. In this, the consequent goal of politics would be to simply articulate this reality and then derive the arkhê proper to it, closing the question of politics. Rather he approximates an ontological position through his account of moments of dissensus in which, operating under a democratic supposition of ontological equality, the people, the 'poor' rupture a police count and force a disagreement.

This ontological equality, we could also argue, is established on the recognition of a presumably common schema of interpretation, of capacity to be perceived and intelligible. However, with regards to Black Oceania and the West Papuan fight for liberation, drawing on the analyses of radical Black theoretical traditions and their accounts of the ontological condition of Blackness, this thesis stretches Rancière through the prospect of a non~~being~~ which can never be rendered intelligible, who could never be perceived as a part, whose death does not demonstrate a political disagreement, but rather enacts the very condition of modernity. In this, Rancière (2014) agrees that a political subject could be "a more particularized subject, impossible to separate from its articulation ('damned of the earth.')" gesturing to Fanon's (*Les Damnés de la terre*) and radical Black theory. This thesis examines how the police order, the colonial-capitalist count, is established on the denial of Indigenous Oceanic sites of being, and Black ontological capacity, asserting that the critical Oceanic tradition enacts a fundamental dissensus and rupture of its logics of perceptibility. In this however, it also interrogates what it might mean for this rupture in relation to the prospect of the end of modernity, of the end of the world, and the gesture towards new futures, grounded in new and old relationalities.

Conclusion

This section of the thesis has served both as an introduction and as a preliminary review of the theoretical frameworks which have come to inform and shape myself as the author of this thesis. Through the cosmological relationship to Morning Star as Oa Malara, I have introduced myself and opened the thesis with a recognition of the importance of proper ceremony and ritual. Through articulating my pepeha and using *tok stori* to ground and define moments in my life which have shaped the relationships underpinning these analyses, I have

provided some paths towards relational accountability. I have thus situated myself as part of the Indigenous Pacific diaspora, as a son of Iokea, of Papuan New Guinea and as a son of Oceania. Further, I established the supposed interlocutors of this thesis, the Oceanian activists, artists and revolutionaries for whom this thesis is written. As Indigenous Oceanic research, this thesis has sought to prioritise relationality and being in good relation, emphasising Oceanic relation to water and to each other as its overarching medium of navigation. This included some account of my early relations to water, the people, conversations, and influences which helped bring this piece together.

In this, I hope to have shown that this thesis is itself the product of a series of relationships and interactions which have informed its trajectories and shaped its analyses. It is also grounded in a particular reading of the work of Epeli Hau'ofa (2008) and the Oceanian tradition, which emphasises the more radical kernels of his call for a New Oceania to navigate the existential threats Oceania faces in the early 21st century. Thus, as the author of a piece which calls for the rethinking of collective Pacific identities and ways of understanding ourselves, providing an account of myself is important so as to articulate and lay bare so to speak, my biases and influences. In this I also heed both the calls to intellectual honesty in Teaiwa's (2014) account of the white influences she gets to choose, and Ahenakew's (2017) call to interrogate our historic referents. As such, I introduced some preliminary remarks on the nature of ontology, the world, and the subject, through Heidegger, Althusser, and Badiou, setting the groundwork for an account of Rancière's intervention. I then turned to Rancière who has, through both engagement with his work and in applications of his principles in political action, come to shape the conceptualisations of politics, disagreement, and dissensus which inform this thesis. These concepts coming to frame the interrogation of two sites of onto-epistemic policing; aqua nullius, and white supremacy, which undermine the prospect of a collective Oceania.

In the next section, under the framing of Morning Star as Venus, I interrogate how the logic of aqua nullius has come to police and deny the possibility of an Oceanian world anchored in its relation to water. This is done by denying or turning away from Oceanian Indigenous water relationalities through legacies of legal exceptionality and incommensurability which have been applied in the interests of capital and power, to exercise authority and dominion over the oceans to secure global trade routes and military hegemony. Through the colonial-capitalist relationality embedded in understanding Morning Star as

Venus, I contend that modernity polices the prospect of a New Oceania through its adherence to an implicit principle of aqua nullius which denies the ocean, and water in general, the capacity for ontological or subject expression.

Venus

To continue navigating the relationships between water and Blackness in Oceania, I look again to the Morning Star to guide and structure my analysis of colonial capitalist relations to water. In this, I appeal to the scene of James Cook and his first venture into the Pacific in 1768, supposedly to observe the transit of Venus, as a moment which comes to exemplify the western way of relating to water and Oceania. This scene and story, this often overstated moment in the history of Oceania, through its relationship to Morning Star, has come to structure my tracing of *aqua nullius*. Anchoring itself in its relation to Morning Star as Venus, this section encounters Morning Star through the lens of Western knowledge systems and the presumptions of colonial-capitalism. Cook's initial incursion into the Pacific was presented first and foremost as a scientific research voyage with much of the funding for his trip coming from the Royal Society (Ngata, 2019). Their stated scientific mission was to travel to Tahiti to observe the 1769 transit of Venus. However, Cook had on his person secondary orders from the British admiralty to continue south from Tahiti following the transit and begin mapping New Zealand and Australia, ostensibly in preparation for their colonisation. This particular scene, this moment in which Cook, there under the mantle of western science, received and acted on covert orders sparking a new race for the colonisation of the Pacific, functions as the particular moment or scene which truly encapsulates the multifaceted nature of aqua nullius and the colonial-capitalist manner of relating to water.

As was discussed in the opening section, the parameters of this thesis changed significantly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of international borders. My initial concern for this analysis was derived from Hau'ofa's essay 'The Ocean in Us' (TOiU) in his collection 'We are the Ocean: Selected Works' (2008). Where in Our Sea of Islands (OSoI) Hau'ofa introduced the prospect of a new Oceania, of collective Oceanian relationalities, in TOiU he (2008, p.41) asserts the importance of developing a "substantial regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance… the Pacific Ocean." He bolsters this call in Pasts to Remember (PtR) when he asserts the possibility of formulating "a benign philosophy that would help us pay greater reverence and respect to our natural environments than we do today." (2008, p.72). I was interested in trying to articulate this philosophy, trying to bring together *tok stori*, mythologies, and narratives which explored Oceanian water relationalities in the hopes that doing so might facilitate the development of this philosophy, of the theory underpinning the call to a substantial collective identity.

However, I also recognised that to do this properly, to do it while maintaining good relationality, I could not simply read, extract, and extrapolate different Oceanian narratives. Rather, good relationality necessitated my being in community with the knowledge holders and translators, in community with the environment from which the knowledges were derived. In this respect, both my inability to travel overseas to be there in person to learn the stories and philosophies which underpin and define our Oceanian relationships to water, as well as the time constraints of the doctoral programme meant that I would be unable to do such a project justice. Accepting this reality, I decided that what I could do within the parameters of this thesis was trace and articulate the hegemonic form of water relationality which was underlyingly implied in Hau'ofa's call for new Oceanian water relationalities. In his call for new philosophies and understandings of water relationality to bring Oceania together – in asserting the possibility of difference in water relationalities – Hau'ofa implies an assumed normative form of water relationality against which said Oceanian forms differ. Under Venus then, this thesis proposes to name, interrogate, and demonstrate the consequences of this form of water relation – aqua nullius.

This section engages in an account of the broader colonial-capitalist discourse around water and the different ways in which it has been conceptualised, demonstrating the persistence of a hegemonic form of water relationality. In particular, I contend that aqua nullius is a key logic in the contemporary police order, functioning to obscure the underlying violence and its threat which comprises the 'peace' of modernity, a peace where capitalist and military interests of core nation-states are protected. In chapter four, the frameworks and legal structures which constitute traces of the logics of aqua nullius are explored. While chapter three turns to examine the consequences of this nonrelation, demonstrating the realities which have resulted from the overarching functions of this logic, in chapter four the frameworks and legal structures which constitute traces of the logics of aqua nullius are explored. Utilising scenes from around the world, as well as focusing in on Aotearoa and Oceania, chapter four articulates what is at stake in the continued unwillingness to recognise water as a site of being, as a world. It explores how a disagreement, a dissensus is being enacted through Indigenous and Oceanic water relationalities and their resistance to modernity and its police order which relegates water to the state of aqua nullius. I provide an account of aqua nullius as a form of colonial-capitalist relationality, critical to the functioning of modernity, established on the denial of water as a site of ontological possibility.

In this, I draw on the terminology articulated by Virginia Marshall (2017) in her account of the legal functions of a principle of aqua nullius which she identifies as implicitly accompanying the assertions of *terra nullius* against the first nations of Australia. However, this thesis interrogates the possibility of an implicit hegemonic order which, in the interests of colonial-capitalism, denies water in general its possibility as a site of being, as site of ontological expression. Under aqua nullius, water constitutes a site of unintelligibility and exceptionality where the administration of nation-states and the presumptions of international legal frameworks necessarily exploit this legal exceptionality to circumvent modern law. Thus, terra nullius, as a logic, functions to deny the claim to humanity of the inhabitants of first nations territories such that the nullius stakes a claim about the nature of the people, the occupants. Aqua nullius stakes a claim on the nature of the *thing* occupied, the world in which being is, or can 'be', denying water this prospect from the outset. It then exploits this legal exceptionality to ensure resource extraction, global logistics and trade routes, waste disposal rights, and military hegemony are secured, suppressing the possibility of disagreement via a false schema of consensual rights which distribute the rights to the administration of water within the parameters of colonial-capitalism.

The police logics of modernity thus exploit the legal exceptionality of water, its often vague and open nature in legal frameworks and conventions, to secure the interests of colonial-capitalism. At the same time these modern international legal agreements attempt to administer, account for, and assert the ocean based rights of nation-states. However, these rights, structurally committed to the hegemonic police order of colonial-capitalism, in turn become the right to exploit for nation-state based economic interests. That is, as Rancière reminds us, they become the right to invasion and exploitation. The imposed economic dependence of neocolonialism transforms these rights into the rights of the highest bidder, where the equality of human rights is determined in their capacity to be sold and reified under the capitalist logics of equivalence. The question this section asks more fundamentally is, if modernity can only relate to water as aqua nullius, what does this mean for the struggle for a new Oceania, for a collective way of understanding our people as we stand against the increased destruction of our oceans. It thus traces aqua nullius through legal and philosophical doctrines examining how it came to be an implicit structure of European legal frameworks operating to deny and reject the prospect of new Oceanian water relationalities. Finally, this chapter examines why aqua nullius came to dominate the current global

understanding of water and the oceans, and what its function as part of the police order indicates. It does this with particular emphasis on the consequences and implications of aqua nullius to Oceania and Indigenous communities globally, identifying how resistance has taken place historically, and supposing what resistance may need to look like in the future if Oceania is to remain the healthy and vibrant source of life our ancestors knew it to be.

3. Tracing Aqua Nullius

To trace a history of aqua nullius this chapter examines how the administrative operations of western and international law function to exclude and deny the possibility of a disagreement concerning a different onto-epistemic relationship to water itself. This chapter subsequently functions as an archaeology of aqua nullius, an interrogation of the fundamental nature of this particular colonial-capitalist relationship to water and its structural and systemic traces. In this, it makes use of Rancière's archaeological methodology (2016), examining shifts in European legal, political, and philosophical conceptualisations of water interrogating the moments in which the implicit and explicit operations of aqua nullius manifest themselves. It interrogates the moments in which aqua nullius demonstrates its persistence as an organising police logic of colonial-capitalism. In tracing aqua nullius, I am conscious of not wanting to produce a kind of meta-history, or meta-philosophy of colonial water relationality, one which would paint all European and colonial water relations with the same stroke. My earlier attempts at these analyses (Rew, 2021) could perhaps be accused of this, where I attempted to draw on archetypical relationships to water embedded in creation myths and link them through the Mediterranean to broader European shifts in water law. Through this paper I presented an account of aqua nullius which was overly linear, and homogenising in its account of the forms and operations of aqua nullius, attempting to derive a singular narrative for the function of this logic. The problem was that in doing so it presumed an overarching lattice of colonial water relations which naturalised the operations of colonial-capitalism whereby aqua nullius as an ancient logic seemingly unfolded into its modern form. What this obscured was the specifically violent and unnatural reality of colonial-capitalist relations (Marx, 1990), the ways in which aqua nullius functioned as a specific organising logic of colonial-capitalism, and the multiplicity of ways in which these unnatural relationalities are being opposed.

To avoid the tendency to homogenise this account of aqua nullius, what became paramount was the importance of emphasising difference and the recognition that water relationalities are contingently shaped by a multiplicity of factors at any given point. While this thesis asserts aqua nullius as an overarching logic which frames colonial relationality to water, the significance of the multiple particular relationships we have with water are made all the more important precisely because of our differences. Just as my own relationship to the ocean is mediated through my mother, by ways of relating to and engaging with the world

as a son of the coastal village of Iokea, my relation to water is just as significantly shaped by my father, a pākehā (New Zealand-European) man whose life was bound to the sea, who spent years of his life on the ocean, and who fostered in me from my earliest years, a love and appreciation for this sacred treasure. In asserting that colonial-capitalist relationality to water is dictated by aqua nullius then, this thesis does not mean to impose a broad stroke definition on the individual and particular relationships to water that shape our experiences. Rather, this chapter examines aqua nullius as a recurring structural logic of colonial-capitalism, an implicit and presumed relationship to water which polices modernity and denies the possibility of a disagreement concerning water as a site of being.

Aqua nullius and its persistence as such, is non-linear. There is neither a presumed beginning nor end to its invocation. It persists as a form of relationality across a range of different spatio-temporal contexts. However, under colonial-capitalism aqua nullius has been emphasised, affirmed, and imposed to defend capitalist interests. That is, through the development of colonial-capitalism and its need for globalised markets and systems of trade, aqua nullius became the hegemonic form of water relationality. It is also part of the police order of modernity, and as such is not explicitly stated and defined in law, rather, its persistence serves to deny the possibility of disagreement. Its operations can often only be traced through its absences and gaps, through the ways in which it is obscured and in which a disagreement concerning it is denied. The police order of colonial-capitalism thus functions to partition the site of water from its possibility as a site of being through the implicit denial of an ontological disagreement in which other forms of water and oceanic relationality are vilified and denied from the outset. It becomes clear that aqua nullius can only be opposed through a different form of relationality, an onto-epistemic rupture which is divorced entirely from it. This is precisely the type of water relationality I believe Hau'ofa (2008) appeals to in his '*The Ocean in Us*.' I contend then, that Hau'ofa asserts a dissensus concerning water as a site of being, enacting a rupture against the count of modernity, by reminding us of Oceania's truth, which is that the ocean is the site of our being, it is us. This dissensus demonstrating the falsity, or fantasy of modernity's supposition of separability and challenging its ontological foundations. (Stein et al, 2017).

This archaeology is thus established against modernity's logic of 'enlightenment humanism' which functions to both naturalise and justify the colonial project and European imperialism (Stein et al, 2017). Naturalise, in that through its linear enshrining of patriarchal

European ontological and epistemological frameworks of development conceptualises 'European man,' as the master of 'universal' reason and, as such the pinnacle of social, moral, ethical, and rational progress asserting assimilation into colonial-capitalist relationalities as the natural means by which progress and development occur. This logic functions to retroactively justify the historic and continued violence of the modern political order, the genocides, slavery, and exploitation, as necessary conditions of any and all social progress. These self-aggrandising liberal fantasies of social, ethical, and moral progress are committed to narratives which stress the supposed 'natural development' of these ideas across and throughout history. That is, they are derived from fantasies of ontological security, thus committing themselves to Stein et al.'s (2017) notion of enlightenment humanism and the assertion that history progresses and develops in some linear form or manner. What is key here, is that the presumption of a linear framework for development retroactively justifies the abject violence of colonisation. That is, if history progresses in a linear fashion, and development can only happen in one particular way, then the violence which both precedes and characterises modernity is justified as the necessary and only way through which said progress could be achieved. These stories assert that the modern order of the world is established on international diplomacy, through courts of justice, and a shared global adherence to principles of democracy, freedom, peace, and non-interference. It appears as a global order of legal and pluralistic consensus which seemingly needs only figure out how to navigate a few more hurdles, before achieving its true nature. What Rancière reminds us in his account of the police, is that this order, this pluralism, fundamentally determines its subject *a priori*, such that any suggestion of pluralistic inclusion is always exclusionary. The very nature of counting, of asserting pluralistic consensus always produces a miscount, a false count.

What has instead been made abundantly clear in the early 21st century is that this consensus is a false one, tentatively held together by a shared adherence, not to any principles or legal frameworks, but by the incentives and goals of the colonial-capitalist system, and the promise of violence in the event of outright dispute. Through the rise to prominence of fascist and far-right politicians, recent Supreme Court rulings repealing democratic rights, and the development of increasingly hostile and conservative states across the U.S., as well as the growing prominence of far-right parties, and radical fascist cells in New Zealand and Australia, across Europe and South America, a simple truth is demonstrated. The truth that

this order, this consensus has always been a false one, structurally dependent on the threat of violence (Rancière, 1999). A consensus order which rewards subservience with commodities and consumption, and threatens violence and assassination, the destruction of one's nation-state, or economy in the event of a conflict, a disagreement.[3] These shifts remind us that any and all rights and victories which have been secured in the interests of social justice are the sole consequence of struggle and resistance against the logics of the colonial-capitalism. That is, modern social progress has occurred in spite of colonial-capitalism, not as a consequence of it and as such, if we are not vigilant, those advances can be removed again at any time.

This archaeology is thus framed by a conceptualisation of history and 'development' which recognises that this particular historical path is a consequence of the violent and hegemonic nature of colonial-capitalism as the 'world-system' (Wallerstein, 1974). In this, it draws on Wallerstein's equivocation in asserting that our particular world-system *is* the world, that it constitutes the precise structure of modernity's onto-epistemic manner of relating to the world. It is thereby charged with policing and securing itself, with preserving its fantasies of ontological security. It does this through obscuring its true nature, which is that the operative factor for determining the wielding of power and authority in the world-system is a nation-state's capacity for violence and willingness to express that power to exploit everything and anything in the interests of profit. Modernity hides from its truth, appealing to pluralistic consensus and the belief that society has progressed these rights through incremental change and debate in the public sphere. What is clear however, is that the overarching dependence on capital and its promises of wealth establish a system in which the contestation of claims to racial, economic, and military supremacy, are the implicit and normative driving factors underpinning the decisions of colonial-capitalism's historical agents. Modernity's peace order under is thus established only through military hegemony and the possibility of mutually assured destruction.

Wallerstein (1974) reminds us that this dependence is structurally imposed as a product of socio-economic systems such as neocolonialism which enforce a series of divisions across the order of nation-states. The flows of capital and wealth are dictated and driven by core-nations, the hegemonic powers of the world, who reap the rewards of wealth

[3] In this, the 200+ interventions by U.S. and its partners to protect their interests since the end of the second world war, demonstrates the reality of violence as the principal mechanism of securing modernity's order. (Koshi & Toft, 2023)

and labour extraction from 'periphery', nations, and their imposed structural dependence on these systems. This exploitation is facilitated by semi-periphery nations who administer the periphery nations on behalf of the interests of colonial-capitalism. Underpinning this exploitation is a process of unequal exchange established on the colonial legacies and valorisation of capital within core nations. Under colonial-capitalism, our global order and 'peace' is structurally maintained by the threat of economic or military violence from hegemonic powers, and their vigilant policing of this world-systems interests. Analysing colonial-capitalism as the world-system in general allows for the tracing of moments in which aqua nullius through the structural necessity of its ontological denial functions to enable the exceptional policing of global routes of trade, waste, and resource exploitation.

This analysis takes as its focus European colonialism and imperial expansion fuelling capitalist production, which as one of the preliminary sites of ontological violence structures the exclusion of water as site of being. Furthermore, it maintains that this violence is overarchingly justified and established through the mechanisms of the 'Doctrine of Discovery.' (Miller, 2019). It focuses explicitly on the Doctrine as one of the central and most important legal and moral mechanisms through which the colonisation, genocide, and exploitation of Indigenous people's has been defended. Deriving its authority from the Judaeo-Christian God and the Papacy as the interpreters and executors of God's will on earth, the Doctrine was and is still cited as the legal basis for all forms of colonisation (Miller & Ruru, 2018). However, in this respect, this thesis also recognises that the 'Doctrine' as such does not constitute a singular framework, schematic, or legal body, and that as power shifted under different Papacies, competing bulls were issued reflecting these shifting allegiances and political capacities, even contradicting each other when it suited the growing interests of colonial-capitalism. One of the core motives underpinning Pope Eugene IV's 1436 bull amending *Sicut dudum* granting Portugal the rights to colonisation over the Canary Islands for example, was the Papacy's reliance on Portugal's navy to police these colonial territories, such that "with no navy of his own to do the policing, Eugenius opted for the Portuguese as the lesser of two evils." (Stogre, 1992, p.65). Similarly, as overarching power and influence shifted towards Spain, such as under the Papacy of Pope Alexander VI, the Papal bulls issued, *Inter Caetera* for example, reflected Spanish state interests. Consequently "the canonical mission to evangelize, in this case entrusted to the Spanish crown, served the mutual interests of the Church and state." More than as a set of documents advancing a

specific legal position providing the religious and moral authority, the right, to colonial exploitation, these Papal bulls also function to inscribe and express shifts in hegemonic European power dynamic. The emphasis of certain Papal bulls over others, the competing frameworks embedded within these bulls are thus reflective of shifting global powers and the ways in which competing nation-states positioned themselves within the emergent world-system. Thus, the adherence to certain Papal traditions and legacies themselves functioned as markers of political and social allegiance, commitments to certain Papal and nation-state determined world-views. Accordingly, within the 'Doctrine of Discovery' and its interpretations, what can be seen through the prioritisation of certain Papal bulls over others are critical shifts and challenges to the nature of the underlying police logic, reflecting and securing the interests of more powerful nation-states, the core nations, over others. Shifts which would give rise to the imposition of aqua nullius.

Despite the false consensus expressed in historic and modern accounts of international maritime law, the modern legal order of international relations at sea under colonial-capitalism is established and demonstrated through the principle of 'Command of the sea' (Campling and Colás, 2021). As a naval military concept, command of the sea describes the de facto naval dominance of a hegemonic nation-state. It is a strategic position or axiom which modern global order recognises and aspires to and is established on the assertion that the overarching objectives, or 'basic missions', of achieving naval superiority are to "protects one's own commerce, disrupt the enemy's, move one's own army, and prevent the movement of the enemy's." (Rubel, 2012, p.2). To have 'Command' of the sea is to be able to exert and exploit the unequal dynamics of naval power, to exploit one's "significant superiority such that the freedom of action of the others to carry out the four basic missions of sea power was constrained and that of the stronger navy enhanced." (Rubel, 2012, p.2). It is ultimately demonstrated in the capacity to defeat, or blockade an opponent's naval powers, their capacity to exert total control over key sites. Here, maritime control can be differentiated from command. As control refers to the relative exercising and demonstration of command, that is thus bound to specific territories for certain periods, that is, the exertion of control is always spatio-temporally constrained. Command of the sea then refers to the broader condition of naval hegemony which under a colonial-capitalist world-system, establishes a de facto peace and order by threat of violence globally. Constituting one of the sites of military hegemony which establish the rules-based global order of 'peace' it is a peace that is

structured on the absence of disagreement enforced in the threat of violence from core nations and specifically, the U.S. as hegemon. This power is exemplified in the U.S. 'blockade' and embargo of Cuba, wherein a trade blockade is enacted through the wielding of this hegemonic power to stifle their economy. Cuba's trade blockade functions as a reminder to other nation-states of the consequences of challenging the current world-system. While the consensus frameworks of international rights and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are posited as the mechanisms which secure international order, what is demonstrated in for example, the refusal to ratify these agreements by the U.S. and a host of other nations, is that they are purely nominal in nature. They function only to obscure the reality which is that the modern international 'peace' is in fact a global hegemony established on capacity of violence, where global maritime order is secured by U.S. command of the sea (Campling and Colás, 2019).

Does Colonisation Think of Water?

How then, does this hegemonic order demonstrate and utilise the logics of aqua nullius? This thesis conceptualises aqua nullius as a logic of the police order which fundamentally acts to deny water its ontological capacity as a site of being, a 'thereness' of the world in which Being can 'be,' into which Being is thrown. To demonstrate this, it examines moments where, through their attempts to count and order the world, the inscribed legal mechanisms of the colonial-capitalist, and particularly Anglo-American police order, deny water its capacity as a site of being and instead conceptualise it as a site of legal excess and unintelligibility. This is accompanied by an account of the competing colonial-capitalist interests which have influenced these inscriptions and secured the modern 'peace' order. In this respect the Doctrine of Discovery constitutes the main legal justification and principle through which Indigenous peoples have been denied their human and sovereign rights. (Miller, Ruru, Behrendt, & Lindberg, 2019). At its most fundamental level the Doctrine wielded the power of the Papacy as the chief voice or representative of the Christian God on earth, to justify the colonial and imperial interests of European nations. It thus granted them morally and legally the divine right "to invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue" non-Christian peoples and nations. (Hayes, 1998, p. 65). The Doctrine of Discovery was explicitly codified in modern international law through the 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Johnson v. McIntosh* which denied the Native American peoples of Piankeshaw and Illinois a legitimate claim of capacity to exercise sovereignty over their own lands such that

they were “not considered to be the full owners of their lands after Euro-Americans arrived and claimed a property interest.” (Miller, 2019, p.38) In the context of this decision, Indigenous rights to their lands, including the right to sell their lands, was conditionally established on a Euro-American claim to discovery, and therefore beholden to whichever government staked said claim. Thus, *Johnson v. McIntosh* confirmed that Indigenous property rights were determined entirely in relation to Euro-American governance. Establishing a legal basis internationally for reifying colonial claims to land, *Johnson v. McIntosh* has subsequently informed numerous claims and disputes globally over Indigenous titles (Miller, 2019). These colonial legal bases having been cited as recently as 2005 in U.S. Supreme Court rulings as a justification for the continued dispossession of Native American lands (City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation [2005] 544 U.S. 197).

Miller (2019) identifies ten elements which define and constitute the operations of the Doctrine of Discovery, the conditions of its functions. These being first the prevalence of the Christian faith, such that the will of the Christian God became the moral justification for discovery. Second, Eurocentric notions of civilisational supremacy, in which European society were presumed to be inherently more just, civil, and righteous. Third, the right, or claim to first discovery, that is, the title derived by being ‘first’ to colonise a territory was asserted. Fourth, the requirements of actual occupancy and possession were necessitated, this being particularly asserted by English scholars who sought to justify their colonial projects. Fifth, the enforcement of ‘pre-emption’ was included – the exclusive right of the discovering nation to buy and sell the lands of Indigenous peoples. Sixth, the assertion of a type of Indian/Native title, that is, the absence of full ownership of lands and instead reduction to a diminished ‘native title.’ Seventh, was the establishment of limited Indigenous sovereign and commercial rights, such that the ‘discovered’ nations were forced into political and economic trade agreements which denied them the fullness of their sovereignty. Eight was the right of contiguity, that is, the right to claim contiguous/surrounding territories. Ninth was the assertion of Terra nullius, an element under the doctrine which presumed certain territories to be uninhabited. And lastly, conquest, the right to acquisition of title through outright military victory and suppression (Miller, 2019). To this end, this thesis posits an eleventh element, the implicit functioning of a logic of aqua nullius which denies water as a site of being. A logic which is critically established in our world-system through the Doctrine and the interests of British and U.S. hegemony as they sought to justify their colonial legacies.

The Reformation

The Reformation and the English rupture with Papal authority during the early colonial period constitutes a key moment in the founding of the modern world-system. A significant portion of the bulls which comprise the Doctrine concerned the conflicts between Portugal and Spain as they held the greatest political sway in Europe and with the Papacy during the early 15th and 16th Centuries. However, the growing strength of England and other northern European nations facilitated a reconfiguration of power relations in Europe, and an increasing imperative for England to break with the ecclesiastical authority of the Papacy. Up until this point the yoke of Papal authority had, for the most part, functioned as the sole arbiter of the principle written or inscribed claims to legal, moral, and political legitimacy for European Christian nations. This of course being accompanied and reinforced by the military capacity to affirm and defend the parameters of one's nation. Increasingly stifled by the machinations of the Papacy and its allegiances, the English monarchy under King Henry VIII consequently sought to break with the Catholic church in its entirety. Through a series of Acts of Parliament, and the 1534 Act of Supremacy which declared the monarch the 'Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England' Henry VIII reestablished the inscribed legal authority and claims to state legitimacy within the body of the monarch. In doing so, Henry was also pressed to fundamentally reconceptualise the legal mechanisms and authority by which the English monarch had claim to 'discovery' and the right to colonisation.

The English break from the monarchy is better understood as a process initiated by Henry, but properly realised by his successor, Queen Elizabeth I. While Henry initiated the process of the reformation, asserting the possibility that England was capable of wresting hegemonic power over European international law from the Papacy, Elizabeth demonstrated it. To establish a legitimacy for English colonial exploitation and 'discovery,' Elizabeth and her legal scholars had to both challenge the premises of previous claims to discovery and enforce this challenge through the demonstration of military supremacy as the core power advancing the colonial-capitalist system (Miller and Ruru, 2009). Underpinning the desire to challenge the legitimacy of previous claims of discovery in particularly, was the 1455 Papal bull *Romanus pontifex* issued by Pope Nicholas V in support of the Portuguese King Afonso V. Under *Romanus pontifex*, Pope Nicholas V explicitly sought to incorporate a claim to possession over the seas into the Doctrine. This being the result of Castilian (Spanish) and Portuguese disputes over colonial domains in Guinea and Africa in general, wherein the

Castilians for example sought to impose trade tariffs on commodities brought from Guinea (Davenport, 1917). Until this point, the imposition of tariffs and claims to the right of discovery to necessarily include the oceans and seas had been generally unregulated. The 1455 *Romanus pontifex* signalled a particular framing and logic by which the police order of that time sought to incorporate title and claim to the sea. In its text Pope Nicholas V extolls the labour of the sea-based endeavours of Alfonso's colonial ventures wherein the Papacy recognises that he undertook through "greatest labor, danger, and expense" the colonisation of a range of coastal African territories and islands for the Catholic church (Davenport, 1917). In this bull the papacy explicitly sides with the Portuguese claims granting and affirming to "King Alfonso and his successors… the provinces, islands, *harbors*, places, and *seas* whatsoever, how many soever, and of what sort soever they shall be…" (Emphasis added, Ibid, p.23).

Through *Romanus pontifex* Miller's (2019) account of the logic of the operations of congruence as a key element of the Doctrine function to grant a right to possession through adjacency. Critically, it is clear that the underpinning motivation was economic in that the question of exclusive trade rights and the capacity to impose tariffs was central. It also exemplifies Miller's (2019) element of the imposition of limitations on native and Indigenous trade and commercial rights, wherein the legitimacy of trade in the colonial territories was constrained by its reliance on colonial powers. Further, while the disputes in particular concerned the colonisation and administration of African territories, the decisions had broader legal consequences through their establishing of international precedence in claim to the sea. However, it was this element of control over the sea legitimated through the papacy, that the English fundamentally had to challenge.

Under the Papacy of Alexander VI, power in European international relations had swung back in favour of the Castilians. This was explicitly demonstrated in his issuance of the 1493 Papal bull *Inter caetera*. *Inter caetera*, and its subsequent *Eximiaie Devtionis* empowered the Castilians with the same rights the Portugues had been afforded under *Romanus pontifex*, while splitting the globe into differing spheres of colonial and trade influence. In this it should be noted that preliminary May 3rd *Inter caetera* neither specifies nor includes the possibility of title or claim to seas as *Romanus pontifex* had. Instead, it accorded to the Castilian Kings, the "countries and islands thus unknown and hitherto discovered… and to be discovered hereafter." (Ibid, p.61). Through the first iteration of *Inter*

caetera thus, there was not a marching claim which explicitly ascribed a logic of congruence to include the adjacent seas and waters, this was instead asserted later through the 1493 bull *Eximiae Devotionis* which specifically functioned to extend to the Castilians the rights of *Romanus pontifex*. Thus, granting to the King of Castile and Leon "the remote and unknown mainlands lying towards the Western parts and *the ocean sea*…" (emphasis added, Ibid, p.68) a right which would be tested through a claim to the entire Pacific Ocean expressed by Vasco Núñez de Balboa for Spain in 1513 (Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb, 1840). Seemingly invoking the logics of congruence, de Balboa sought to enact the authority and legitimacy afforded by the 1493 *Inter caetera* through a ceremonial claiming of the whole Pacific ocean and all its islands as falling under the boundaries *Inter caetera* granted the Spanish Kings. *Inter caetera* had been issued to try and demarcate spheres of influence between Spain and Portugal as competing powers in a bid to prevent outright conflict (Scott, 1987). This was done by dividing the world from the Northern and Southern poles and granting to the Spanish monarchy the right to claim all "islands and mainlands found and to be found… towards the west and south by drawing and establishing a line from the Arctic pole to the Antarctic pole… the said line to be distant one hundred leagues towards the west and south from any of the islands commonly known as the Azores and Cabo Verde." The question which other European nations were faced with in the aftermath of these bulls was in what way would they be able to claim a form of inscribed legal authority through which they could then justify their colonial presence abroad.

With the international order subsequently divided into competing spheres of Portuguese and Spanish claims to discovery and occupation, the rise of England and their shift away from Papal authority under Henry VIII meant that there was a fundamental need to reconfigure the colonial boundaries and bases of this order. Elizabeth thus reaffirmed Henry's position that ecclesiastical authority was consolidated within the English Monarchy through establishing the English Protestant Church, with herself as 'Supreme Governor of the Church of England' via the 1558 Act of Supremacy (Gee, Hardy, 1896). To reestablish the legitimacy of English claims to discovery and to challenge the international order imposed, English legal scholars developed Spanish interpretations of the Doctrine to demonstrate that that England's previous and future 'discoveries' were not in violation of the 1493 Papal Bull established by the absence of any other Christian authority on those lands (Miller, et al., 2010). As a consequence of the reformation the definition of 'discovery' was fundamentally refined to

include the requirement of occupancy and possession of the lands for there to be a legitimate claim to discovery (Miller, et al., 2010). Hence, Miller (2019) identifies occupation as a key element of the Doctrine. While this represented the inscribed authority, and provided Elizabeth with the religious and judicial authority to engage in colonisation, I want to be clear that it was an authority which was maintained internationally through force and the threat of violence such that the mercantilist logic "where profit is extracted though power" came to condition English struggles for hegemonic control and command of the sea (Campling and Colas, 2021).

Importantly, the caveat of 'legitimate' discovery requiring occupation resulted in a situation in which the international context of colonialism shifted away from the authority of the Papacy to one maintained explicitly by the threat of violence. In this, the Rancièrian conceptualisation of rights as part of a police order which constrains and obscures disagreement and difference, allows us to recognise that the right to occupation could only be established here through superior naval and military might, through the explicit and martial silencing of disagreement. In the absence of a specific international legal system then, the English wielded military authority to construct an international order predicated on violence and its threat: first, the emphasis of military might was determined in the English capacity to enforce and necessitate this requirement; second, by the realisation that any other nation who wished to stake a claim to occupancy would need to be able to defend their claim. The enforcement of this order was founded on and defended by English victories against the Spanish, Dutch, and French throughout the 16th – 18th Centuries such that "by the turn of the nineteenth century [England] had emerged as Great Britain, ruling the proverbial waves." (Campling and Colas, 2021, p.75) Underpinning their rise to power was a fundamental dependency on the pseudo-legal issuance of 'Letters of Marque' which served to legitimate what was essentially European piracy. That is, they gave privateers, mercenaries, and pirates, all non-state actors, the legal authority to invade sovereign territories and the right to attack, destroy, and capture the ships of enemy nations (Campling and Colas, 2021). Elizabeth I thus relied heavily on the raids of Sir Francis Drake on Spanish ships to steal the gold, spices, and slaves the Spanish had stolen from South America and Africa. Illegality on the ocean was necessary for the persistence of "state-sponsored pirates like Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh [who] were integral to the development of the early modern English government and economy" (Ibid, p.77). European nations thus wielded the legal ambiguity of the oceans to

engage in these acts of piracy and violence without, for the most part, forcing outright war. Indeed, much of the naval conflict which arose during this period was influenced by English Navigation acts and disputes over how the ocean was understood and legally protected. Central to this was the question of how and in what ways authority was exercised across the ocean.

The English reinterpretation of the Doctrine thus established the precedence and mechanisms through which other nations could explicitly engage in colonial ventures. Their military capacity to deny others the claim to occupancy and affirm their own, was fundamentally legitimated in their hegemonic position. The English right to discovery, including the logic of the claim to occupancy as a criteria for discovery, was secured in their maritime victories and the rise of British naval supremacy. This strategy resulted from the fundamental cost and failure of the Spanish Armada, and was accompanied by the growing professionalisation of the English navy as they solidified their role as a central power in Europe, enshrining their definition of Discovery in the international context (Miller, et al., 2010). Thus, the English demonstrated and affirmed the legitimacy of their claim through their position as a hegemonic naval power. As such, rather than a claim to the seas being determined via congruence as seen in *Romanus pontifex*, and incorporated as adjacent territories open to possession, the English imposition of the requirements of occupancy developed the conditions for aqua nullius as the organising logics of maritime law. In response to attempts by the Papacy to institute a legal order on international trade then, the order of aqua nullius was established. Aqua nullius is anchored in the fundamental inability of colonial onto-epistemic frameworks from conceptualising the ocean as a site of being; as a space one could occupy and inhabit. Aqua nullius is also critical to the establishing of the requirements and incentives of colonial-capitalism, such as international trade routes and the development of global markets. What is clear then is that from the Reformation and English reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Discovery onwards, the overarching mechanisms by which international maritime order has been legitimated is via maritime hegemony. Thus, aqua nullius has influenced modern interpretations of the Doctrine of Discovery by rendering the sea a site of contestation; a legally ambiguous liminal space in which the claim to power was staked and challenged.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada consequently strengthened Elizabeth's religious and legal claims to discovery and made clear to the other European nations that military might was the true arbiter of legitimation in discovery. It demonstrated that England would play a critical role in the contestation of the seas, and that Papal authority was no longer sufficient for determining the right to colonisation. Through the additional requirement of colonial occupation, Elizabeth thus encouraged a broader, more contested period of European colonialism (Miller, LeSage, and Escarcena, 2010). Where "the absence of a uniform and codified maritime international law" gave rise to imperial powers imposing their own rules and naval strategies in such a way as to secure their interests and facilitate their exploitation of their colonies (Campling and Colas, 2021, p.78) This reflecting "the strategic importance of trans-oceanic waterways in the unfolding antagonism between mercantile empires during the eighteenth century." (Ibid, p.78). Consequently, by the early 1700s the Dutch, English, French, and Spanish, amongst others, were all engaged in contested projects of colonisation of non-European, non-Christian nations around the world (Miller, 2019). However, the ultimate defeat of the French in 1815 and the establishing of a "world order born out of the 1814-15 Vienna settlement consolidated Britain's blue-water policy into the famed Pax Brittanica." (Campling and Colas, p.79). Under the Pax Brittanica then, the hegemonic form of water relationality was one in which English naval supremacy was essentially guaranteed free reign over the seas, where the authority, the right to traverse the oceans was established on capacity for violence and exploitation.

It is in this context, that this chapter in its analysis of aqua nullius is bestowed the title, Venus. It is this imperative for violence, requirements of occupancy, and the privileging of 'first discovery' rights, gave rise to scenes such as Cook's first venture into the Pacific. In scenes and moments such as these, subterfuge and the guise of scientific discovery were weaponised to obscure England's colonial intentions in the Pacific (Miller, et al., 2010). This was done out of concern that if other nations became aware of an English presence in the Pacific it would give way to a colonial 'goldrush', in which European nations would race into the Pacific to stake their claims of discovery and occupation, disrupting the Pax Brittanica upon which English hegemony rested (Campling and Colas, 2019). Hence, Cook received secondary orders to begin surveying the Pacific for colonisation after landing in Tahiti. As the title of this section, Venus denotes the form of water relationality which has come to characterise colonial-capitalism. Venus speaks to the reality of relating to the world, to

Morning Star and thus to water only through the lens of exploitation and occupation. Venus speaks to the inability of the onto-epistemic frameworks of colonial-capitalism to consider different ways of understanding the sea and waters, other than just as commodities or spaces to be occupied and controlled. Venus is unable to see water as a site of being, or the sea as worlds to which the Indigenous peoples of Oceania might belong.

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Command of the Sea

> Command means that the United States gets vastly more military use out of the sea, space, and air than do others; that it can credibly threaten to deny their use to others; and that others would lose a military contest for the commons if they attempted to deny them to the United States. (Posen, 2003, p.8)

What emerged out of British naval hegemony was the contemporary legal order of international relations at sea under colonial-capitalism. This order of naval dominance which arose out of the Pax Brittanica is today embodied in the concept of 'Command of the sea.' As a naval military concept, command of the sea describes the de facto naval dominance of a hegemonic nation-state; in our contemporary context this is attributed to the U.S. It is a strategic position or axiom which the modern global order recognises and aspires to, and is established on the assertion that the overarching objectives or 'basic missions' of achieving naval superiority are to "protects one's own commerce, disrupt the enemy's, move one's own army, and prevent the movement of the enemy's." (Rubel, 2012, p.2). To have 'command' of the sea is to be able to exert and exploit the unequal dynamics of naval power, to exploit one's "significant superiority such that the freedom of action of the others to carry out the four basic missions of sea power was constrained and that of the stronger navy enhanced." (Rubel, 2012, p.2). It is ultimately demonstrated in the capacity to exert total control over key sites, and to defeat or blockade an opponent's naval powers. In this maritime control can be differentiated from command, as control refers to the relative exercising and demonstration of command and is thus bound to specific territories for certain periods; that is, the exertion of control is always spatio-temporally constrained. Command of the sea refers to the broader

condition of naval hegemony which, under a colonial-capitalist world-system, establishes a de facto peace and order by threat of violence globally. Constituting one of the sites of military hegemony which establish the global order of 'peace.' Peace as the absence of disagreement, through the threat from core nations, led by the U.S. as the current hegemonic power, of the exercise of this command. This is exemplified in the U.S. 'blockade' and embargo of Cuba, wherein a de facto trade blockade is enacted through wielding this hegemonic power to suffocate their economy. This example further serves as a reminder to other nation-states of the consequences of challenging the current world-system. As such, while the consensus frameworks of international rights and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are posited as the mechanisms which secure international order, what is demonstrated by example, in the refusal to ratify these agreements by the U.S. and a host of other nations, is that international rights are purely nominal in nature. They function only to obscure reality; that the modern international 'peace' is in fact a global hegemony established on capacity of violence, where global maritime order is secured by U.S. command of the sea.

While the functions and realities of 'command of the sea' under modernity and U.S. hegemony are explored further in the next chapter, what is important here is how English foreign policy necessitated the adoption of this power structure. U.S. command of the sea and its role in the evolution of maritime law, thus owe a significant debt to the legacies of Dutch and English maritime policy as they both played a critical role in providing the framework through which the U.S. came to establish itself as a key maritime power. In *'Capitalism and the Sea*' Campling and Colás (2021) examine two figures in 16th Century discourse on maritime law: the Dutch theorist Hugo Grotius, and the English theorist John Selden; whose correspondence through their respective Mare Liberum (Free Sea) and Mare Clausum (Closed Sea) treatise's would play a significant role in framing European maritime law (Campling and Colás, 2021, p.71). One of the key principles which divided their positions concerned the operations of the legal rights of imperium and dominium. In this, imperium reflects the exercising of power and use of force by a state to protect their interests and secure their sovereignty, while dominium reflects the logics of property and ownership rights, of enclosure and the right to deny what is common. Grotius, under the Mare Liberum doctrine, thus advocated for the position that the sea existed outside of the rights to dominium, due both to its nature as an unoccupiable realm and its requirement for the natural right to trade,

in much the same way that air is the natural right of all who breathe.. That is, Grotius advocates for the sea to remain in common, going so far as to suggest that "no part of the sea can be accompted into the territory of any people" (Campling and Colás, 2021, p. 72).

While Grotius maintained that dominium could not be exercised, he allowed that imperium could be exercised to an extent through the securing of territorial waters, differentiating them from the general sea. Selden, however, in his response Mare Clausum (Closed Sea) sought to demonstrate that the sea was and could be subjected to the rights of dominion and property as much as imperium. This was argued through the persistence of fishing rights and rights to coastal defence, which seemingly demonstrated that dominium could be exercised to an extent. However, it is worth noting the Steinberg suggests that the power or right exercised in these instances concerned stewardship rather than occupancy or inhabitancy.[4] Campling and Colas (2021) contend that Grotius and Selden both held to a belief that control, or a spatio-temporally limited stewardship, could be exercised over certain territories. Thus, where Grotius saw the open sea as a veritable no man's land upon which no dominium either could nor should be exercised, Selden's position rendered the ocean "a geo-economic battleground of maritime powers", where "appropriation of the sea's resources is always conditioned by the capacity of one or another to control those waters" (Campling and Colás, 2021, p.73). Here, we then see the critical importance of limited control as a component of aqua nullius in producing a situation where the default order of command of the sea operated. An order where hegemony was demonstrated through the capacity to spatio-temporally constrain the maritime behaviours of others via moments of control – to blockade, inhibit and generally prevent nations from carrying out the four objectives of maritime power.

Campling and Colás (2021) argue that underpinning the difference between Grotius and Selden's interpretations of dominium and imperium were the particular political and social contexts from which they were writing. Grotius from the context of Dutch mercantilism and the rise of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and Selden from the context of English monarchical rule. This was particularly important in the aftermath of the Elizabethan reinterpretation of the Doctrine and the imposition of the qualification of occupancy (Miller, 2019). Here, the "Seldenian, closed waters perspective" necessitated that

[4] Phil Steinberg notes that this was more a stewardship rather than outright ownership given the inability to police said waters all the time.

"the oceans remain a geo-economic battleground of maritime powers", where the right to exploit and occupy the seas was "always conditioned by the capacity of one state to control these waters." (Campling and Colas, 2021, p.73) That is, the English and Seldenian view imposed power and military might as the underlying mechanism through which capitalism, and the development of global markets, was established. In this respect, the contexts and logics informing their colonial legacies resulted in two conflicting views of the ocean, where "the Dutch wanted to *use* the sea, the English to *control* it, and *deny* it to others." (Lambert, 2000, p. 61) These positions would thus come to a head in the Anglo-Dutch wars, which broke out in relation to conflict over these principles and their corresponding trade and imperial consequences, such that "the Anglo-Dutch wars… 'more than any others fought by the British… were trade wars." (Campling and Colas, 2021, p.75). The imposition of narrow trade conditions, such as those outlined in the English 'Navigation Acts' and particularly the Navigation Act of 1651, demonstrated English adherence to the principles of *Mare Clausum* where they sought to close off and monopolise maritime markets for English traders by prohibiting the use of foreign ships and crews, and prohibiting their colonies from trading with and exporting to countries other than Britain. However, as English naval supremacy and the Pax Brittanica was established what Campling and Colás (2019) note is that it was the Grotius' doctrine of *Mare Liberum* which would be overarchingly privileged, and so become fundamentally intertwined with the logics of imperium to serve the interests of capitalism. Thus, it was "the Grotian principle of 'freedom of the seas' which subsequently defined the Pax Brittanica." (Ibid, p.71)

By the end of the 18th Century this Pax Brittanica resulted in the oceans functioning as "interimperial sea space[s] that could not be owned but could be dominated" (Benton, 2014, p.161). This was the consequence of increasingly globalised markets and trade routes which needed the ocean to function as a commons for the transfer of commodities around the world, where the relative peace of this order was determined by English naval hegemony. As a consequence of English naval hegemony, in exerting control over much of the world's oceans through their blockades, the oceans were 'free' and 'open,' as long as the English, and thus the interests of capital, were obeyed (Campling and Colás, 2021 p.79). While British hegemony was contested through the 17th and 18th centuries, under the subsequent Pax Brittanica, the English operated through a form of command of the sea wherein the freedom to traverse the seas was secured through English maritime dominance, and as subject to their

will. In this, the ocean was excused from the logics of dominium and property rights established in *Romans pontifex* and *Inter caetera,* and did not necessarily require the active and explicit wielding of imperium and control, only its threat. Through command of the sea, the ocean functioned as an extra-legal space, outside of the onto-epistemic logics of colonial relationality, void of being and sensibility, existing only as the intermediary by which command of the sea operates. This has been key for the development of global trade where "the core principle… was that free trade should continue even during times of war among third parties – to 'establish the immunity of private property from capture at sea" (Ibid, p.81). This colonial function of the sea as aqua nullius results in a situation today where the asymmetrical capacity to exert control constitutes the binding mechanism of modernity's maritime peace and order, facilitating the free flow of trade as long as it benefits the hegemon.

Command of the sea then does not require an active and present policing, an occupying of all seas, but rather the executive capacity, the possibility, as the hegemonic power of the world-system, to enforce this order. It is a possibility established on the threat of violence. While the Pax Brittanica "harnessed the freedom of the seas for its own benefit" such that the Royal Nacy "upheld the Grotian concept of the high seas as nobody's property, since it was only Britain that was in a position to fully exploit the oceanic commons", this order be would critically reconfigured with shifts in global production. Campling and Colas (2021) thus recognise two further shifts in the world order which played a key role in shaping the contemporary conceptualisation of the oceans. First, the Pax Brittanica was fundamentally undermined towards the end of the 19th century by the rise of global industrialisation, where "newly industrialising states like Japan, Germany, France, and the USA began to challenge the Pax Brittanica", with the sea as the key site of this contestation (Campling and Colas, 2021, p.83). This gave rise to a renewed era of navalism such that "the decade before the First World War thus witnessed an international re-emergence and recognition of the sea as a site of great-power rivalry." (Ibid, p.87). In this, the U.S. seizing of the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century demonstrated a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy through a willingness to challenge the hegemonic order of international maritime law and English command of the sea. Second, the aftermath of the Second World War shifted global power relations as a new hegemon emerged. A weakened Europe and strengthened U.S., as well as shifts towards 'decolonisation' and the 'abolition' of

imperialism, led to a reshuffling of core nations as the hegemonic power of colonial-capitalism. In wielding their wealth and military capacity, the U.S. asserted itself as the new centre of power, claiming command of the sea, a position which was reaffirmed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Command of the sea, maintaining the threat of violence of U.S. military hegemony, and the denial of water as a site of being represent the true condition of the contemporary global order. I assert this not to discredit or render invisible the many treaties, agreements, and attempts to navigate the diplomatic nuances of the current world-system, the efforts undertaken by our elders and communities to protect and defend these oceans against the encroachments of colonial-capitalism. As I saw in my time at COP25, they have continually sought to challenge these logics and demonstrate to the modern order that colonial-capitalist understandings of the world commit a violence in the denial of water as a site of life and of being. However, I contend that the authority which legitimates the modern police order, modernity's peace, is fundamentally established on the onto-epistemic denial of water as a site of being, ensuring its order by enforcing U.S. exceptionalism and command of the sea. The police order of colonial-capitalism must move to obscure the notion that its order is established on violence and its threat, this being done to maintain the fantasy of ontological security, the fantasy of a pluralistic, liberal democratic notion of the world order. This was especially important in the aftermath of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, in securing the U.S.' position as hegemon and defining the contemporary world-system. It is from this context that, as Wallerstein (2004) reminds us, near total U.S. hegemony protecting the interests of the capitalism was established.

The fantasy of ontological security which modernity and its colonial-capitalist world system supposes is that it is an order founded on pluralistic, democratic counts determining its order, rather than on violence. This order is thus projected to justify its violence morally and ethically, as well as obscure and deny any possibility of a difference, a disagreement concerning waters' possibility as a site of being. As such, Rancière's (2010) account of the function of the modern interpretation of the rights of man as part of a police order which partitions the perceptible, and so denies the prospect of a dispute with the order, is of use here. The police order of colonial-capitalism is structured on the right of the hegemon and its allies to invade other nation-states to secure these supposed rights reinforces this point. It is

precisely the modern liberal democratic order – established on the right to invade to secure human right – which produces U.S. exceptionalism and facilitates the numerous human rights abuses, invasions, assassinations, and interventions that they have committed over the last fifty years to establish and protect this order. It is this modern order of purportedly shared human rights which, through their implicit requirement of U.S. hegemony and command of the sea, structurally necessitates adherence to an onto-epistemic world-view predicated on aqua nullius.

UNCLOS and International Law

Serving to justify the colonial-capitalist police order, contemporary maritime law weaponises these concepts of shared rights and U.S. command of the sea to ensure that the interests of colonial-capitalism are protected. In this, alongside command of the sea, aqua nullius operates through the mechanisms of modern international maritime law and its imposed police order which ensures the fantasy of ontological security and the ethical justification of its violence. This necessitates the denial of the ocean, of water, and its possibility as a site and part of Indigenous, specifically Indigenous Oceanian, being. Thus, while command of the sea functions as the 'strongarm' or 'enforcer' of the hegemonic form of water relationality, the moral and ethical justification of the violence of this order is established in international law. Colonial-capitalism justifies its violence through a policing operation in the legal sphere, denying the possibility that there is a difference or dispute over the nature of the ocean. Campling and Colas (2021) note that the modern international maritime order then was established through a number of institutions, conventions, and agreements signed throughout the late 20th century. One of the most significant of these was the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS), which secured certain rights and privileges of nation-states over their congruent ocean territories through the implementation of 'Exclusive Economic Zones' (EEZ's). However, these EEZ's left the broader ocean open to exploitation as a commons. As an agreement UNCLOS attempts, in a similar manner to *Romanus pontifex,* to inscribe these logics of possession over the sea. Here, a type of positive property right is exercised over congruent oceanic territories up to a certain limit, this limit correspondingly implies a negative right, or absence of right, to intervene in activities beyond these limits. This negative right, or aqua nullius, serves to procure the oceans as a supposed commons through which colonial-capitalism can engage in trade, extraction, and exploitation, as long as these activities serve the interests of core-nations and

the U.S. as hegemonic power. In this, according to Grotius' understanding, the free and open sea was established on "the combination of territorial sovereignty with freedom of trade and navigation." (Campling and Cola, 2021, p.74). Grotius, as discussed, asserted this freedom as a 'natural right' to utilise the seas for trade. It is this right, underpinning Grotius' conceptualisation of the sea which the English first adopted into 'command of the sea', and which was then appropriated by the U.S. in the establishing of the modern world-system, that reinforced the capitalist right to exploitation of the sea as a commons. This is critically demonstrated where the U.S., under UNCLOS, "insisted that all sea beyond the twelve-nautical mile territorial waters is open to unimpeded movement by military vessels" (Ibid, p.104), by which they assert the capacity and right to deploy up to those limits if they so choose. The needs of capitalism to engage in global trade were thus balanced with the security and sovereignty requirements of the modern nation-state, and the exceptional state of the U.S. as the modern hegemonic power and wielder of command of the sea, including the enforcement of aqua nullius in its modern form.

UNCLOS thus represents the assertion of a 'universal' right to the sea to secure the necessary commonality of water for global capitalism, a police operation which structures the rights to invade, blockade, and inhibit other nations' rights to this aquatic commons.. The universality of the right to engage in capitalist exploitation, conditional on an understanding of the sea as free, provides the very basis through which this freedom is denied, via the 'right to blockade' and the world violence which structures the modern police order. It also serves to deny the possibility of a dispute concerning the possibility of understanding the ocean by appealing to a false consensus performed in the signing of UNCLOS. Performative in that, while the U.S. as well as a number of other nation-states have signed UNCLOS, they have refused to ratify it within their own legal frameworks (Campling and Colas, 2021). As such, it is apparent that UNCLOS is not the actual mechanism by which maritime peace and order is secured, given it lacks any capacity to enact and protect the rights it supposedly secures. It functions only to inscribe the legal, moral, and ethical authority for the continued exploitation of the seas and the right of the hegemon to invade to secure their authority and rights to exploitation. UNCLOS, while no doubt signed with good intentions by some nations, ultimately serves to inscribe and reinforce the extra-legal functions of power and violence as the ordering mechanisms of colonial-capitalist exploitation.

Within UNCLOS, two explicit forms of right to the wielding of power and authority over water are expressed as legitimate in the modern era. These being first, the common, natural right to the seas as the means by which trade and commerce occur, and second, through the operations of the logics of congruence, which under EEZ's function as a type of property right. These rights, however, are superseded by the exceptional right of the hegemonic power, which wields the right to command and infringe upon these rights in any space to secure the interests of capital. At the same time, recognising that power is not totalising as there is always the potential for aleatory ruptures within the police order. There have been and continue to be critical moments of political disagreement in which colonial-capitalist ways of understanding water relationality are fundamentally challenged. Through historical and renewed resistances, which challenge modernity's conceptualisations of the world, the police logic of modernity which renders the ocean aqua nullius, is and continues to be a site of dispute and disagreement. This is expressed through the development of frameworks which demonstrate the importance of Indigenous oceanic relationships, and so seek to challenge the contemporary order. The Pacific has and continues to be key in the staging of these challenges in our historic unwillingness to accept U.S. command of the sea.

In the following chapter I examine in more detail the realities and consequences of aqua nullius in the Pacific. However, a preliminary note on how aqua nullius has been challenged through legal and diplomatic institutions is valuable. In this, the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) Movement from 1975 to 1985 highlights one of the most significant moments in which the modern police order of command of the sea was challenged. Having felt the consequences of nuclear weapons testing in the years following the Second World War, Oceanian activists challenged the hegemony of U.S. command of the sea and the modern order of colonial-capitalist water relationalities. As a collective the NFIP movement came together to enact precisely the form of collective relationality of Oceania, bringing together the multiplicity of nation-states and Pacific cultures across our ocean to protect the seas and our islands from destruction at the hands of radioactive fallout and waste. It demonstrated that there was a fundamentally different way of relating to the seas, one that recognised the ocean as part of us, as a site of being and life that we share an ancestral responsibility to, showing that the ocean was a world to which we belong.

Through the NFIP movement's 1983 *Peoples' Charter for a Free and Independent Pacific*, there was then a fundamental challenge to the presumptions of U.S. command of the

sea. Article 2 of the charter in particular asserted that across the entire Pacific Ocean we would not allow the testing, transport, development, and use, of nuclear weapons or power. This was an undermining of the conditions of unimpeded military movement that the U.S. had sought to embed within UNCLOS. With Article 4 further seeking the "withdrawal of colonial power from the Pacific" (Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, 1983). In these claims, the prospect of a new Oceania, of a new conceptualisation of the Pacific, anchored in collective Indigenous Pacific water relations was asserted. Here, a dissensus, a rupture in the order of the world was enacted. Protests, speaking tours, conferences, artworks, marches and ceremonies brought together collective Oceanian identities grounded in a shared struggle to protect our oceans, our lands, and our peoples from the threats of nuclear war and power (Ma'ia'i & de Jong, 2021).

This resistance culminated in the signing of The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty in 1985 by eight leaders of the South Pacific Forum (Tairea, 1986, p.1). This treaty, while serving to provide some legal framework for protecting the Pacific Ocean and establishing nuclear weapon free zones, ultimately functioned to reinstate the modern police order and U.S. command of the sea. Rather than moving collectively to oppose the militarisation and potential nuclearisation of the Pacific, the Treaty instead asserted that members could "decide independently whether to allow foreign nuclear ships and warplanes to use their harbours and airports" (Tairea, 1986, p.1). The Treaty functioned then to diffuse to particular members the prospect of a collective onto-epistemic disagreement over the hegemonic form of water relationality. The capacity to legally oppose military operations as a collective Oceania, to challenge U.S. command of the sea and protect our oceans, was fundamentally undermined by the Treaty, and reconfigured collective resistance into a question of decisions by individual nation-states and their need to protect their interests. The Treaty was criticised by Melanesian leaders such as Fr. Walter Lini, who asserted that "nothing in the treaty would stop American and Soviet vessels from steaming through the zone… that it was not what Pacific Islanders wanted." (Ibid, p.2) As an operation of the police order of pluralistic liberal democracy, the Treaty served to protect the ontological security of modernity and the U.S.'s role as hegemon. It thus reasserted the ocean's nature as aqua nullius, as a commons, rather than as a site of Oceanian being, as the world to which we belong. While the NFIP movement sought to radically challenge the hegemonic order of colonial-capitalism, and so assert a new Oceania, Tairea (1986) demonstrates how these

radical claims were reconfigured by the operations of The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty to serve the interests of U.S. command of the sea and exceptionalism. The Treaty was "marred by dissension amongst the signatories themselves" where "a growing skepticism has arisen from proponents and opponents alike about its worth" (Ibid, p.1-2). The Treaty then functioned as part of the police operations of modernity to obscure and deny the prospect of a disagreement concerning the onto-epistemic nature of the ocean.

The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and its reinstating of U.S. command of the sea, the hegemonic police order of colonial-capitalism, rather than protect Oceania has significant consequences for us today, as China threatens the U.S.'s position as hegemon. In this, the Pacific Ocean constitutes a key site of hegemonic conflict, as these competing nation-states move to secure global trade routes in the interests of colonial-capitalism, reaping the rewards as core-nations. This has been demonstrated in the development of the AUKUS military pact - an agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. - which moves to strengthen Australian naval capabilities. This accompanying the rapidly rising possibility of outright military conflict in the Pacific, where both the U.S. and China have indicated a willingness to escalate tensions. To this end, the U.S. has recently engaged in accelerated programmes of alliance building and maintenance across the Pacific to protect its interests and position as hegemon, signing deals with Papua New Guinea, Palau, and the Marshall Islands, and potentially incorporating New Zealand into an AUKUS 'pillar-system.' Further, visits by Indian leaders and representatives across the Pacific signals a shoring up of alliances in the face of a challenge to U.S. hegemony. For their part, China has signalled both their position and value as a core nation, as well as their willingness to upset the modern order, by challenging U.S. command of the sea. In this, the Chinese challenge to U.S. command of the sea differs from that enacted by the NFIP movement. Here, China moves instead to replace the U.S. as hegemonic power, rather than assert the reality of water based relationalities. In this respect though, Chinese influence and aggression pales in comparison to the growing U.S. militarisation of the Pacific ocean as the incumbent hegemon looks to protect its interests. The U.S. thus appeals to the framework of the Indo-Pacific, with its emphasis of the Pacific ocean, and maritime trade routes connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans to define its allies. Through AUKUS, the U.S. has increasingly moved to secure these trade routes, facilitating the development of Australian naval capabilities, endeavouring to

equip Australia with nuclear submarines, and developing its long-range surveillance and military support capacities (Sachdeva, 2021).

The potential AUKUS tier-system, and signing of these agreements as individual nation-states, has led to some of our nations, Papua New Guinea for example, playing off different world powers to try and win better deals for our people; bigger slices of the proverbial pie. In May of 2023, Papua New Guinean Prime Minister James Marape signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement and an Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations with the U.S. (McCarthy, 2023). While these agreements might economically benefit Papua New Guinea in the short-term, it also reflects the type of thinking Hau'ofa (2008) describes as part of the new South Pacific Society, where Pacific nations "believing in their alleged economic insignificance tend to play to the full their strategic value to get as much advantage as the can" (p.18). The Defense Cooperation Agreement, for example, appears to grant certain legal prerogatives and immunities allowing the U.S. an expedited capacity to by-pass legal hurdles in Papua New Ginea which they might otherwise have encountered operating through Australia and New Zealand. It was also negotiated under significant secrecy, where the full details of the agreement would, according to the U.S. State Department, only be "made public when it comes into force" (Wright, 2023). In this, concerns were raised in Papua New Guinea as well as to the "motivation behind fast tracking the processes with zero public consultation and parliament debate" (Wright, 2023). What is the most concerning, if it is found to be a part of the final agreement, is paragraph 3 of Article 3 in the leaked document, which includes the caveat that Papua New Guinea "retains civil and administrative jurisdiction over U.S. personnel for acts or omissions occurring in the territory of Papua New Guinea" (U.S. Department of State, 2023). The imperative here, being that the U.S.'s capacity to wield their economic and military power to protect the interests of the nation-state and their position as hegemon, also gives them the right to define what does and does not count as official duty, and so what does and does not count as their interests. Here we can clearly observe the exceptional status of U.S. hegemonic power at work.

A cynical view of the leaked documents then might suggest that the middlemen of Australia and New Zealand, and the legal hurdles that might be faced operating through them, are being by-passed with the U.S. moving to secure a stronger and faster response capability in the region. However, the full text remains to be released, and renewed struggles against U.S. hegemony and the consequences of military and nuclear violence in the Pacific are growing.

There are new calls for international solidarity to demilitarize the Pacific, to struggle again for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. The prospect of a new Oceania, of the staging of a dissensus, of a rupture and reconfiguration of the world is always immanently possible. As we march towards an increasingly tenuous and fraught era of conflict over the Pacific and U.S. command of the sea, the imperative of challenging and overcoming aqua nullius, of imagining and invoking new worlds grounded in Oceanian relationships to the sea takes on a renewed significance.

At the same time, there are struggles taking place within the international climate sphere which speak to global attempts to navigate the consequences and realities of climate change. For example, the 2023 United Nations High Seas Treaty which looks to protect 'Biodiversity beyond national-jurisdictions' (BBNJ) and establishes a legal framework for the administration of the high seas. Here, there is a renewed significance as the high seas become increasingly central to capitalist exploitation and the development of new forms of extraction, such as though deep-sea ocean floor mining. Thus, while pitched as a treaty to protect biodiversity, this protection tends to take the form of administrative and legal frameworks that enable the exploitation of the high seas. While its main principles prioritise first the fair and equitable sharing of Marine Genetic Resources, as well as securing Area-Based Management Tools and the formation of marine protected areas, this in fact leads to a further commercialisation of the aquatic commons under aqua nullius. Where, on a domestic scale, aqua nullius treats the waters as a commons to state exploitation. This can also be seen in Aotearoa for example, through disputes over the Foreshore and Seabed Act, and the question of whether or not the EEZ was a commons, or whether Māori could exercise different claims, different relational forms to the ocean. Further, the development of better Environmental impact assessment mechanisms and the capacity building for and sharing of marine technologies fundamentally reaffirms the principal understanding of the seas as a 'free' commons, a continuation of U.S. command of the seas and aqua nuillius. The free market and overarching reifying logics of capital necessitate the denial of the oceans as a world. The police order of modernity functions to deny the oceans as a space in which Indigenous Oceanian relationalities challenge colonial-capitalist fantasies. Through a range of legal and political mechanisms which serve to reinforce false pluralisms under liberal democracy, the modern order of colonial-capitalism imposes a logic of aqua nullius to retain its hegemonic position. Ultimately, as part of the police operation of colonial-capitalism the logics of aqua

nullius secure their interests but fail Oceania and the people. Rather than gesturing towards a different way of understanding and relating to water, these frameworks function instead to reinscribe aqua nullius and command of the sea.

The High Seas Treaty may then provide simply another means through which U.S. hegemony can be demonstrated, through which the exceptional nature of the U.S. as colonial-capitalist hegemon allows it to exercise control over water. As the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty coopted a disagreement concerning the nature of the ocean, so I suspect the High Seas Treaty will prove to enshrine a reaffirmation of U.S. exceptional power and command over the seas. What must become clear then, is that the modern frameworks of rights and declarations ultimately function to reinscribe U.S. hegemony. Any time a movement towards collective Oceanian relationalities challenges U.S. command of the sea, the U.S. wields these laws to protect its interests and deny the possibility of disagreement and dissensus. It is this realisation which establishes the basis for my claim that a movement towards a new Oceania must overcome aqua nullius and its reinscription of U.S. command of the sea. This realisation comes about in three parts: first, colonial-capitalism is dependent on a relation to the seas as aqua nullius to maintain its order of free trade and ontological security; second, aqua nullius is fundamentally antithetical to Oceanian conceptualisations of the ocean as a world to which we belong; and third, we must recognise that the modern framework of international maritime law and peace is established on these logics of aqua nullius. It follows that the struggle towards a new Oceania, which heeds the lessons of Hau'ofa's "The Ocean in Us" (2008), must move beyond liberal democratic struggles for recognition and representation, and move instead towards a new world entirely. This is the truth signalled by Venus and the colonial-capitalist relationality it represents: that the dawn of a new day, a new world, and the hope that new forms of collective relationality enacted and won through struggle will help us to survive the impending night of modernity's collapse.

In this chapter, I have explored how the logics of aqua nullius developed out of the early colonial-capitalist period and the rise of English naval supremacy. Through the contestations and shifts in the Doctrine of Discovery, a principle of command of the sea was established to facilitate the break from Papal authority. In reconfiguring the order of international law and tying it to the interests of nation-states, the emergent colonial-capitalist international order, necessitated aqua nullius and the treatment of the sea as a natural commons through which trade could be conducted. This schema, through institutions such as

UNCLOS, The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, and AUKUS has sought to enshrine U.S. exceptionalism and command of the sea in the modern order. What has been made clear is that the international order of maritime rights is fundamentally superseded by the authority of the hegemon to secure its world-system and position as core power. Contemporary attempts to inscribe an international legal order which protects the oceans and environments, such as through the High Seas Treaty, fail in their inability to recognise, let alone overcome, the extra-legal powers of the hegemon and its structural necessitating of aqua nullius. The hegemon, through command of the sea, exercises its extra-legal capacity to supersede the property rights and the right of that which is held in common. These rights are then rendered structurally meaningless by their inability to even name the realities of aqua nullius and its corresponding order of command of the sea. In the next chapter the material consequences of this order, of aqua nullius and command of the sea, is examined to highlight that this order is antithetical to the survival of our peoples in Oceania, to the survival of all humans, and to a world in which life can thrive.

4. Scenes From the Imperial Frontiers of Aqua Nullius

Wansolwara, Global Ocean Solidarity

I here examine a range of case studies which demonstrate the material reality of aqua nullius and its consequences on the seas. I provide an account then, of the state of wansolwara, our one saltwater. These case studies are subsequently ordered according to first, a global perspective, second, an Oceanic perspective, and third, an example grounded in my immediate context here in Aotearoa. This is not to exclude Aotearoa from Oceania by differentiating it, but rather to acknowledge the particularity of where I am, where my feet are planted. While I belong to the beaches of Iokea in Gulf Province, I locate myself here in Aotearoa, as I have been nurtured here by the waters of the Hauraki Gulf (Tikapa Moana) for the majority of my life. So, I distinguish between Aotearoa and Oceania in this section to acknowledge this particularity, and my responsibility as tauiwi to emphasise and challenge the effects of colonisation by standing in solidarity with te Ao Māori. For the purposes of this thesis, I have limited the account of aqua nullius to an interrogation of the state of saltwater today. This is not to undermine the significance of aqua nullius in operating through fresh and frozen water contexts, but rather to explore the consequences of aqua nullius on the ocean, especially the Pacific Ocean. In exploring the consequences, challenges, and threats aqua nullius poses to Oceania, and the Pacific Ocean in particular, I demonstrate the ways in which aqua nullius functions across the world-system of colonial-capitalism to ensure the profits and security of U.S. hegemony. Aqua nullius functions to maintain the oceans as a free and open commons through which U.S. military presence can be exerted, however, it also operates as an organising logic for the ways in which colonial-capitalism generally relates to the seas.

This chapter demonstrates the pervasive reality and consequences of our current colonial-capitalist world in relating to water as aqua nullius, tracing the different forms it assumes to impose. This is done through an account of saltwater under a Global lens, where aqua nullius and its relationship to the colonisation and destruction of the oceans, of saltwater, is examined via the impact of global climate change on oceanic health. In providing a brief account of the consequences of global mean sea level rising, ocean acidification, and ocean warming on the seas in general, this chapter provides an empirically grounded overview of global saltwater health and its current trajectory under colonial-

capitalism and the logics of aqua nullius. From a Pacific lens, this chapter then shifts to interrogate the overarching mechanisms through which the health of the Pacific Ocean is jeopardised. This is done through demonstrating the consequences of U.S. command of the sea, their increased militarisation of the Pacific, nuclear and non-nuclear waste dumping, and renewed forms of destructive resource extraction across Oceania as key instances of aqua nullius which secure the flows and interests of capital. This chapter then turns to an account of aqua nullius in Aotearoa, analysing how the Foreshore and Seabed Act (2004), its ensuing controversies, and the current state of saltwater health and protections demonstrate the privileging of exploring how aqua nullius operates on a domestic scale. At the same time, this thesis acknowledges and recognises the significance of resistance and challenges to aqua nullius which are taking place. Through global climate activism and legal struggles to protect the seas, collective Oceanian resistance to the function of U.S. command of the sea, in the form of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movements, and in the ways co-governance and Indigenous rights have been asserted in Aotearoa, demonstrate aqua nullius to be a logic constantly threatened by a new Oceania, by Indigenous Oceanian water relations. Colonial-capitalism is thus challenged in its core assumptions of the onto-epistemic separability of water and being, by the prospect of Oceanian notions of ourselves being collectively bound in our relationship to the Pacific Ocean.

While I move to examine these ways of enacting our relationship to saltwater through global, Oceanic, and Aotearoa specific lenses, this is necessarily limited by the complexity of water and our relationships to it, as well as the material limits and constraints of the thesis itself. As such, I focus on these chosen scenes or moments which highlight the realities of aqua nullius in demonstrating the global and interconnected nature of its logics and consequences. This reminds us that while the struggle towards a new Oceania is still regional and localised, based within our particular context, what we are struggling against is global, and will necessitate global solidarity to overcome. I have chosen these scenes as I believe they demonstrate both the reality of aqua nullius as it operates today, but also the logics of Indigenous and collective relationalities which challenge and contest this hegemony. I acknowledge that in the selection of these scenes, there is a certain degree of U.S. and Eurocentric focus in responding to the West as the contemporary hegemonic power, however, I do not mean to suggest that this is a complete account of the state of water today, rather it serves to introduce the framework of aqua nullius for interpreting how colonial logics have

come to characterise our contemporary relationships to the oceans. Further, while I look at aqua nullius through the lens of Oceania often as a collective region, I do so not to understate the individual island and community-based struggles to protect the waters to which they belong. I aim instead to examine Oceania as a collective, to reflect the collective solidarity necessary to our overcoming of aqua nullius. Lastly, the role of Aotearoa is explored as one of the key sites of contestation of aqua nullius, in which both Māori have challenged and continue to challenge the logics of aqua nullius and its operations within specific nation-states.

Through each case study, by examining how water is exploited and demonstrating how aqua nullius is operationalised to justify and secure this exploitation, this chapter highlights the reality and prevalence of aqua nullius. It also identifies the forms resistance to this exploitation and degradation of the seas which have taken and continue to take place, asserting that this resistance demonstrates irreconcilable differences between the colonial-capitalist world's relation to water and Indigenous Oceanian relations to water. Differences which, I contend, cannot be expressed through the frameworks of international rights while these rights serve the interests of capitalism. These acts of resistance and challenges to aqua nullius enacted on the globe, regional Oceanian, and nation-state scale of Aotearoa, thus gesture to different, new, and old relational forms. They gesture to resurgent Indigenous relationalities which recognise and understand the Pacific Ocean as part of our very way of being in the world, as a defining component of the world to which we belong.

This chapter, in navigating the brutal realities of aqua nullius and its consequences while also holding to the truth enacted in the forms of resistance which challenge its logics, moves through certain tonal shifts. This facilitates the bringing together of scientific and material analyses of water and its exploitation, as well as the theoretical, spiritual, and radical relational contexts in which water is defended and protected. It does this in the hopes of painting a broader but detailed account of the state of water today, endeavouring to provide an account and a glimpse into the complex future that we are called to navigate, while demonstrating how these situations are inextricably tied to the logics of aqua nullius. While this glimpse can only grasp at the complexities involved in these struggles on the frontiers, I have chosen each scene specifically because they represent the brutal realities of the struggle against the destruction of our Pacific Ocean. Further, they also demonstrate the ways in which capital wields both state-sanctioned and nonstate-sanctioned violence to enforce its

will, such as utilising police operations within the international legal context to enshrine its logics. In this respect, the reality of the sea as one of the key frontiers of capital exploitation is clear. It is a reality in which the violent consequences of its logics are explicitly and openly contested, challenged, and rebuked. From the unified struggles across the Pacific as part of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, to our contemporary struggles against the dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific Ocean and hyper militarisation of the region through AUKUS, this chapter links these scenes of violence through the logic of aqua nullius, demonstrating that its imposition today is structured on an onto-epistemic antagonism at the heart of capital, the logics of separability which would move to divorce Oceania from its relationship to the Pacific ocean as part of our being.

United Nations and Indigenous Relations

I begin this account with some of my own experiences attending the 2019 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) '25th Conference of the Parties' (COP25), the 'Blue COP.' It was during this conference that the United Nations declared 2021 – 2030 the 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.' I was selected as part of a delegation of Indigenous Māori and Pacific youth at these talks in Madrid, as a member of 'Te Ara Whatu' and the Indigenous People's Caucus. There, I had the honour of meeting distinguished Chieftains, elders, healers, activists, academics, and artists, and bore witness to the strength, tenacity, and power of collective Indigenous solidarity. For me what was truly demonstrated in my time there was the importance of collective community, of good relations and solidarity, where the common language we often shared was care of our worlds. The strength of reaching across the world through shared resistance and existence against colonial-capitalist violence demonstrated the necessity of going beyond its systems. The necessity of invoking new and old ways of relating to each other, to the world and to the seas, and of recognising the critical role these ways of relating play in our collective struggles for liberation.

The particular scene for the global interconnectedness of saltwater and the consequences of aqua nullius came to me in the form of an informal dinner with an Indigenous youth delegation from the United States' and its territories. It was a gathering of younger Indigenous activists, and was one of the only moments during that time where we were able to escape the structural violences of the space that was COP. During that week,

armed security had followed and prevented us from preparing songs and ceremonies to close space. Consequently, this informal dinner opened a space for us to share stories of resistance, of our homes and their beauty, of colonisation and of climate change, and of hopes for the future. We imagined and invoked new futures, called our ancestors together through our shared struggle for our environments, and sought to move together. In this, the question and need for Indigenous struggle on a global scale was also increasingly apparent. The interwoven consequences of climate change and its effects on our communities manifesting in our shared stories. These relationships and links between our struggles highlighted the fundamentally international nature of aqua nullius as the consequences of colonial-capitalism on a global scale affect Indigenous peoples and our ways of life.

One of the more significant of these conversations which would evolve throughout our time together centred around the dual consequences of ocean warming. For Indigenous communities in the far northern hemisphere, rising ocean temperatures carry with them the reality that traditional and customary hunting grounds – which these communities have relied on for millennia, are no longer accessible. As once frozen ice bridges are melting and traditional routes once navigated to access these territories are no longer accessible, this means that the traditional ways of life for these communities are now under threat. The global effects of climate change for the Indigenous North and their communities are fundamentally linked to the threats of sea-level rise faced by Oceanian nations. These are the consequences of a colonial-capitalist world-system which operates solely to protect its profits, exploiting the world and its oceans as much as it can. The sea level rise in Oceania and the melting of the ice in the North, are two sides of the same coin of the consequences we suffer under colonial-capitalism. Importantly I think, the linking of our struggles through these conversations and solidarities spoke to Indigenous ocean based relational forms which undermined aqua nullius and demonstrated the fundamentally intertwined consequences of colonial-capitalist violence. Our conversations spoke to the oceans' interwoven nature as part of the global system of climatological and environmental consequences of human activity, where colonial-capitalist environmental violence is leading us towards increasingly dire futures. At the same time, these discussions highlighted our ability to identify and challenge these logics, to articulate what was at stake and strive to collectivise our resistance, to name and try and enact dissensus, and forge a new path.

The role Oceania is called to play in this struggle to defend the oceans is highlighted by both Hau'ofa and Teaiwa, who remind us that the sea is a part of us – it is in our blood and is part of what makes us who we are. Hau'ofa (2008) reminds us that "no people on earth are suited to be custodians of the sea than those for whom the sea is home" that "we are such a people. Our roots, our origins are embedded in the sea" (p.57). Thus, where Indigenous communities in the far Northern hemisphere are no longer able to access their customary hunting and fishing grounds due to the melting of sea ice – that same melt contributes to the rise in global sea levels and the 'sinking' of the islands of Oceania. There is thus a renewed need for collective regional resistance to the colonial-capitalist exploitation of the oceans, and renewed calls for international solidarity in the struggles against climate change and its effects on the oceans. Central to this, for Oceania, is the fundamental disagreement with the colonial-capitalist conceptualisations of the ocean; the reality of the oceans' capacity as a site of being and life from which we challenge U.S. hegemony and its imposition of aqua nullius. In the face of increasingly volatile climate change and its consequences, the need for collective Oceanian relationalities is critical to mitigate and prevent the worst effects of this environmental catastrophe. What this suggests is that Oceania must be willing to confront the logics of U.S. command of the seas, the free flow of capital, and the exploitation of our oceans to challenge modernity's blindness to its self-destructive condition. As custodians of the sea, Oceania is charged with the duty of defending the oceans, of challenging the hegemonic order of the world to protect the oceans for future generations. The ocean is our shared heritage, and we cannot continue to allow this world-system to poison, militarise, dump, and exploit our heritage; the gift of our ancestors. To be good ancestors ourselves, to be in good relation with the generations which come after us, we must then strive to overcome this system entirely.

This first scene, this shared moment of being in relation with Indigenous youth on a global scale, has come to inform the inclusion of the global lens which underpins the staging of the following scenes. In listening to our Indigenous family from the North tell of the desecration of their ancestral waters, and the resistance undertaken by Indigenous activists against these attacks on their waters, it became increasingly clear that the global imposition of colonial-capitalist white supremacy has imposed a logic of aqua nullius that is both hegemonic but also implicit and hidden. This thesis has explored modern legal frameworks that in fact function to strengthen rather than challenge U.S. hegemony and exceptionalism at

sea. During my time in the international sphere of climate negotiations, there were moments of resistance and resurgence, conversations, ceremonies, and story sharing which invoked new oceanic and global relationalities. These moments were ruptures against the backdrop of increasingly frustrating climate negotiations which focused more on capacities to calculate and regulate carbon credit markets, rather than on challenging the systemic conditions which destroy our environments and peoples. Against the renewed purpose of this rupture, these negotiations ultimately failed to achieve their apparently liberal ends. It became clear that these international frameworks were in fact wielded to obscure and stultify genuine disagreement with the system, to prevent the possibility of dispute with the very order and nature of the world.

In Madrid, by engaging in water ceremony with elders the significant of more holistic forms of relationality, of the healing nature of a ceremony, was also demonstrated. I was reminded of the importance of ritual, of rhythms and patterns and intentions as part of Indigenous relationalities (Wilson, 2008). These moments challenged the boxhead framings of modern individualistic relational forms, instead reflecting nonlinear invocations of histories and futures, conceptualisations of the oceans and waters as primordial sites of being, as ancestral parts of ourselves (Andreotti, 2016). The underlying relational forms embedded within these ceremonies spoke to ways of understanding and relating to the world, where modernity might conceptualise 'abyssal' into a space of insignificance, these ceremonies opened a spiritual depth and a rehabilitative space (Santos, 2008). This is precisely because, as these scenes demonstrate, Indigenous resistance to the logics of aqua nullius today are fundamentally grounded in forms of relationality that exist outside of the binaries of abyssal thinking, outside of the epistemological boundaries imposed by modernity's Cartesian boxhead framing of itself as modern (Andreotti, 2016). While there is important work being done within the international legal systems and conventions, I think the more valuable lesson came in the importance of enacting the relational ways of being in the world which have and will continue to bring us together into our struggles to protect our environments and futures.

In my brief time within the U.N. climate space, the experience was somewhat paradoxical; I bore witness to incredible displays of Indigenous solidarity, spent time with elders and activists whose lives are committed to the struggles for a better world for the next generations. Activists, academics, leaders, elders, and healers, whose relationalities rupture the logics of abyssal thinking and the structures of modernity, and challenge the assumptions

of separability, enlightenment humanism, and the modern forms of the nation-state. On the other hand, these new relations were formed against the backdrop of increasingly disingenuous pledges by global leaders, nation-states, and their representatives to address the climate crisis. Often the negotiations within COP exemplified an unwillingness by these frameworks to engage with Indigenous ways of understanding the world, then producing situations in which our last lines of defence take the inadequate form of requirements for free, prior, and informed consent, and so allowing for the mere expression of dissent (Ghazalli, 2019). However, in this the possibility of a disagreement concerning the order of the world itself, a rejection of the hegemonic order, of aqua nullius, is policed and denied from the outset; in many instances dissent is noted but ignored or outvoted.

The inability and unwillingness of capital to take meaningful action to prevent global climate change and widespread ecological collapse was demonstrated in these experiences. Colonial-capitalism's inability to acknowledge, accept, and seek to rectify the consequences of its violence has produced a situation in which climate change and extreme weather events increasingly threaten and disrupt the normative functions and fantasies of ontological security through which modernity's order is established (Stein et al, 2017). At COP25 I also experienced a coming together of multiple worlds and relationalities. Through its formal operations as part of the administrative order of colonial-capitalism, COP came to demonstrate the false solutions offered by capital to mitigate the consequences of its persistent exploitation and extraction of natural resources. It exemplified the ways in which colonial-capitalism can only promote more capitalism, more consumption, and more exploitation as the solution to its challenges (Stein, et al. 2017). Logics and frameworks which offer neocolonial 'green industry' initiatives in Sweden, such as solutions to the aforementioned struggles of the Sápmi people, are solutions which recommit violence against the Sápmi peoples and the encroachment on their territories (Orange, 2022). Where Sápmi activists and land defenders condemn the solutions of 'green industry' and colonial-capitalism, they challeng the assertion "that the same industry that put us into the environmental is going to get us out of it." (Orange, 2022). The colonial-capitalist solutions of green washing, the development of green and blue markets, of green and blue industry, and the fundamental inability of colonial-capitalism to reckon with the consequences of its unbridled greed and consumption have left us in a precarious position.

SROCC

Pervasive adherence to the tenets and comforts of modernity, its fantasies of ontological security and the goods it rewards us with, has often meant that the colonial-capitalist interests of modern nation-states and the hegemonic power of U.S. have been maintained and prioritised within these international spaces. At the same time though, these spaces also function as sites in which Indigenous communities force their voices into the conversation, where an undercommons of Indigenous knowledge sharing and collaboration, of practicing good relations proliferate (Harney & Moten, 2013). They function as a site where the police logics of the house of modernity which obscure resistance and disagreement were challenged, and in some instances are overcome. Part of my work during this time then, was alongside Noongar elder Wardong (David Collard). We followed one of the key 'outcomes' from the conference, the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) '*Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*' (SROCC), to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the oceans and what that might mean for the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus. Here, I summarise some of the key findings in the report as it reflects the most recent snapshot of global ocean health, drawing out its consequences for Indigenous peoples, in particular for Oceanian peoples. This allows me to present a more detailed image of the global state of saltwater today, and the role of aqua nullius in creating this situation. I do this so that the stakes of aqua nullius and modernity's world-system can be fully drawn out, to demonstrate the global consequences of colonial-capitalist environmental destruction, and the potential futures which we face if we continue on these paths. This account of the state of wansolwara is expressed to show, through an account of the state of the oceans, the necessity for global, world-system change to protect Oceania and our ways of life; to protect the dream of a future Oceania.

This thesis draws on the comprehensive meta-analysis of the current scientific literature on the state of the oceans and cryosphere through SROCC which provides a snapshot of the state of the world's salt and frozen water in the early 21st Century (IPCC, 2019). This snapshot was accompanied with a set of unsettling projections concerning the future. Here, SROCC's account of the material state of water today establishes a possible site of contestation through the U.N. and international legal spheres, demonstrating the consequences of aqua nullius on a global scale and the necessity of our resistance. Across four different scenarios, or 'Representative Concentration Pathways' (**RCPs**), the report

modelled and analysed the Near-term (2031–2050) and End-of-century (2081–2100) consequences on the ocean and cryosphere, assuming differing levels of global warming. Ranging from the lowest increase in global warming, or the best-case scenario, to the highest increase, or worst case scenario, considered: **RCP2.6,** which assumes a mean of 1.6°C (1.1–2.0°C) global warming in the near-term and 1.6°C (0.9–2.4°C) by the end-of-century; **RCP8.5,** which assumes a mean of 2°C global warming in the near-term and 4.3°C global warming by the end-of-century. Here, the report paints a stark picture for the future of our oceans. As such, this section examines the overarching projections in the best-case and worst-case scenarios, with a specific focus on what these projections mean for our Indigenous communities and for oceanic biodiversity. Sea-level rise, ocean acidification, ocean warming, and ocean desertification are all going to have significant effects on our people both in the near term, and by the end of the century; as such, we should know what exactly we are facing.

The report notes then that since the 1970s the IPCC is "virtually certain" that the world's oceans have warmed, and highly confident that the oceans have absorbed 90% of the excess heat that has entered into the climate system (IPCC, 2019).[5] That is, the 'warming' in global warming is predominantly occurring in the world's oceans, with this warming being very likely the result of 'anthropogenic forcing' or human activity. Further, since 1992 the rate of ocean warming has likely more than doubled, the frequency of marine heatwaves has very likely doubled since 1982, while also increasing in intensity (very high confidence) (Ibid, 2019). Lastly, it is virtually certain that the ocean surface acidity has increased through absorbing more CO_2. That is, the ocean has very likely absorbed 20–30% of the total human caused CO_2 emissions since the 1980s, contributing to ocean acidification as the pH level of the ocean globally is very likely declining (IPCC, 2019). As the Oceans acidify, this creates harsher and harsher conditions for shellfish, crustaceans, and coral reefs, and has the potential to cause widespread ecological devastation and mass oceanic die off. What this all suggests is that, as a result of anthropogenic climate change, entire Oceanic ecosystems are under threat, with global climate change and its consequences on the Oceans painting a dire picture for

[5] The report uses five qualifiers to represent the differing levels of confidence in its findings: *very low*, *low*, *medium*, *high*, and *very high*. As well as these terms to reflect the assessed likelihood of certain outcomes or results: *virtually certain* (99–100%), *very likely* (90–100%), *likely* (66–100%), *about as likely as not* (33–66%), *unlikely* (0–33%), *very unlikely* (0–10%), *exceptionally unlikely* (0–1%).

many of the communities which have subsisted on traditional coastal food sources for generations (IPCC, 2019).

Consequences & Resistances

What became clear, as Wardong and I navigated these talks, was that these changes and their consequences were not going to be shared equally. Rising sea temperatures, for example, are more likely to develop ocean deserts and marine heatwaves along the equator, disproportionately impacting the Indigenous communities of the Pacific. At the same time, these communities contribute the least to the actual causes of climate change. That is, despite contributing some of the lowest carbon emissions per capita, many of our Oceanian nations are more vulnerable and likely to bear the brunt of the more brutal realities of these changes (IPCC, 2023). As the tides rise and the oceans claim back more and more of our lands Indigenous communities, particularly Indigenous Oceanic communities, are often on the literal frontlines of climate change. Through ocean warming and potential species migration, to acidification and potential shellfish and crustacean die off, the biodiversity of the Pacific Ocean which has sustained us for millennia is under threat, posing serious questions about our futures (IPCC, 2019). In this respect, it is important to remember that the ocean is a global system where its complex interactions between temperature, sunlight, nutrients, gasses, life, and an array of other factors, which all play important roles in balancing and regulating the world's climate systems and in supporting life in general (IPCC, 2019).

We must be clear that the ocean as a system is not limited by the lines we have drawn across its surfaces, and that the consequences of climate change will not be limited by national borders. Thus, the climates of entire regions are going to shift and change as a result of human caused imbalances in these systems (IPCC, 2019). These changes will impact not only our shorelines, but our collective traditional and Indigenous ways of being and sources of subsistence. These possible futures will then necessitate resistance and solidarity on regional and global scales, as we navigate the increasingly apparent consequences of climate change (Keen & Fejo, 2023). Protecting Oceania for future generations, the task of all ancestors, will need community and good relations as we navigate future disasters, it will need global action and activism by artists, lawmakers, thinkers, and dreamers. To navigate the 21st century and beyond Oceanian Indigeneity in its multiplicity, linked through its relationship to environment and the ocean, must challenge and overcome the consequences of colonial-capitalism and U.S. hegemony.

There are two areas in particular where global saltwater health is changing rapidly in ways which threaten the existence of current life and biodiversity as we know it: ocean warming and ocean acidification. The general warming of the ocean, traced since the 1970s, has had far reaching effects due to the complex and interconnected nature of our ocean and climate systems. Ocean warming contributes to three significant changes that Oceania is starting to and will continue to experience if we don't move to change the world. These are global mean sea level (GMSL) rising, coral bleaching, and marine heatwaves. In the first instance, ocean warming is not equilaterally spread, and has occurred substantially more around the northern and southern poles; the Arctic and Southern Ocean (IPCC, 2019). Such that the rising average temperature in these areas has, with a very high confidence, led to increasing rates of ice loss from the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, resulting in the GMSL rising (IPCC, 2019). Warming also contributes to GMSL rise through glacial ice melt and ocean thermal expansion where, as water temperature increases globally, the water itself expands through molecular accumulation.

For Oceania this means that the landmasses and low-lying atolls which make up our sea of islands face ever rising tides as the sea levels rise. For coastal communities in larger landmasses, such as the villages of Gulf Province in Papua New Guinea or for entire island communities such as in Kiribati, Tuvalu, and so many more, sea level rise means the loss of homes, of burial grounds, of ceremonial and traditional lands, and of entire islands. As sea levels continue to rise we, and the generations who come after us, are faced with questions as to whether or not it is right to relocate these sacred and important sites, these important connections, and relations and to consider what that process might look like. In more extreme cases, however, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, sea level rise threatens to claim entire islands, or at least render them uninhabitable for humans through saltwater flooding of agricultural lands, freshwater springs, water tables, and groundwater. As a response to these realities, at COP 27, 2022, Tuvalu announced its decision to 'replicate' and recreate itself digitally as part of the metaverse, with Tuvalu's Minister for Justice, Communication, & Foreign Affairs, Simon Kofe, asserting that "As our land disappears, we have no choice but to become the world's first digital nation." (Kofe, 2022). In staking this claim, Kofe demonstrates the reality and urgency of the struggle against climate change. While we should always be wary of attempts to globalise and digitise our knowledges and lands in an era where data is often traded as currency, there are some benefits to this response. On the one hand, the initiative

helps facilitate a data base and collection of Indigenous knowledges and also highlights the dire future of nations across Oceania if we do not take the necessary actions to challenge climate change; the stark reality that islands such as Tuvalu will become places we can only visit in an online database, erased as a reality for future generations.

GMSL rise is not the only consequence of ocean warming, as there are a multitude of cascading knock-on effects intertwined with ocean warming, each with their own consequences. Ocean warming is, for example, one of the most significant factors underlying coral bleaching. Coral normally exists in a symbiotic relationship with certain types of algae, where the coral provides carbon and nitrogen to the algae, and the algae in turn produces sugars through photosynthesis which the coral uses to function (McDermott, 2020). However, under increased pressure from marine heatwaves, this relationship is breaking down. When water temperatures exceed certain limits, the cells of the algae begin to denature impeding photosynthesis, and coral consequently expel them on mass, leaving only its own white exoskeleton visible. As the coral depend on these algae to produce the sugars they consume, this results in significant die off as the coral starves. The remaining visibly white coral exoskeleton is where this phenomenon gets the name coral 'bleaching' from. Mass bleaching and die off of coral reefs has and will continue to have severe consequences for global ocean health. Coral reefs, while only accounting for around 1% of the ocean floor, are estimated to house around 25% of all ocean biodiversity.

Globally, coral reefs provide natural barriers which protect from storm damage and the more severe impacts of rising sea levels, as well as providing breeding grounds and homes to around 25% of all ocean biodiversity; the fish and shellfish we have survived on for thousands of years. Coral bleaching events and mass coral die off have the potential to disrupt the cycles and ecosystems which have formed the bases of Indigenous subsistence around the world. Anthropogenic forces are further contributing to the widespread destruction of reefs through enabling the rise of 'Urchin (Kina) barrens', where overfishing by humans has led to dwindling predator numbers which has accelerated sea-urchin population growth. The sea-urchins then devour a substantially larger proportion of kelp and seaweed, leaving behind weakened and underproductive coral reefs and ocean floors, further adding to the decline of ocean health. When these populations boom, they give rise to barrens or deserts, large areas of ocean floor where minimal biodiversity persists, and monocultures of urchins and other ocean floor grazers dominate the ocean-scape. Declining biodiversity is a key indicator of

ecosystem collapse and can have knock on effects as other species fail to adapt to these changes (IPCC, 2019). For Oceania, the futures outlined in SROCC will have significant consequences for our food and economic systems in general, as well as to the health of the ocean as our ancestor.

As ocean temperatures continue to climb extreme sea level events, such as marine heatwaves, will continue to occur at an increasing rate. Through 2022, for example, New Zealand's Bay of Plenty endured the longest marine heatwave it has ever recorded, with ocean temperatures sitting above the 90th percentile of average temperature over a year (RNZ, 2022). These marine heatwaves result in significant species die offs and migration, as marine life struggles to navigate water temperatures which exceeds their biological limits (Morton, 2023). Rising sea temperatures also lead to the formation and occurrence of ocean 'deserts'; arid and lifeless bodies of water which, due to a number of factors including heat, climate, and ocean currents, are essentially lifeless, where not even plankton exist and nutrient cycles breakdown due to the surface water being too warm to cool down during the winter months, inhibiting life cycles. The increased prevalence of these heatwaves and deserts is driving marine life into new environments. Since the 1950s, the geographical range of marine life has begun to shift (high confidence) in response to ocean warming, the melting of sea ice, and biochemical changes to their habitats (IPCC, 2019). In particular, there appears to be a poleward shift, where water temperatures across the equatorial line are reaching extreme heights, rendering the region uninhabitable to a number of species, causing marine life to shift further north and south.

Since the 1950s, marine biodiversity has very likely shifted 52 (± 33km) towards the poles for epipelagic ecosystems (upper 200 m from sea surface) and 29 (±16km) towards the poles for seafloor ecosystems (IPCC, 2019). For Indigenous communities, the potential impacts of this biological shift cannot be understated. Many of our communities rely on these fish and food sources for their subsistence, and have done so for thousands of years. Rising temperatures rendering the water uninhabitable for marine life will have widespread and significant consequences on our traditional ways of life. The range of this poleward shift is of critical importance to much of Oceania, but in particular for Melanesia and Micronesia the consequences will be much more significant as their contemporary and historical territories are most proximate to the equator. The northern coasts and exclusive economic zones of Papua New Guinea and West Papua, for example, are within the very likely shift of marine

biodiversity. Territories and waters which our ancestors lived and fished in for thousands of years have, in the relatively short 400 years since colonial-capitalism took root, been so completely altered, with entire ecosystems destroyed or poisoned to such an extent, that our ocean, our ancestor, is now scarred with deserts and barrens, realms devoid of life.

Lastly, as SROCC suggests, the loss of biodiversity, the species which facilitate natural carbon sinks systems and support the natural tendency of the oceans to absorb and process atmospheric carbon emissions, has resulted in the increased acidification of the oceans. The threat acidification poses to Indigenous Oceanian food systems should not be understated. It has a significant capacity to impact and disrupt Oceania's food sources and ecosystems, and so threatens our ways of life. In response to SROCC and its future projections around climate change and carbon emissions the UNFCC declared a 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development', with a focus on developing the blue economy and blue carbon capture. Through Stein et al.'s (2017) house of modernity framework, the operations of enlightenment humanism function here in the suggestion that more 'progress' and 'development' – which under capitalism comes to mean more violence – is the solution to the impending ecological crisis.

The focus on development and strengthening the blue economy are appeals to the onto-epistemic order of colonial-capitalism and its police operations, where the 'rewards' of capitalist exploitation are flaunted and proposed as solutions to its own violence (Stein et al. 2017). What has become apparent is that modernity is reevaluating its conceptualisations of the ocean and looking to new technologies to exploit these realms. In this, 'ocean science for sustainable development' tends to take two forms. The first, has been in relation to the development of new technologies, such as methods for measuring or 'counting' the amount of carbon being stored in 'blue' environments. It allows then for a more accurate analysis of marine carbon sinks, such as mangrove forests, and their ability to process carbon. Within the frameworks of colonial-capitalism, a more accurate count of this process, however, inevitably leads to the commodification and marketisation of these carbon sinks. Such that there has been a significant push within the U.N. to establish the frameworks to monetise these carbon sinks (UNEP, 2023). In the short term the marketisation of these sinks could benefit Pacific nations individually by providing a significant influx of wealth. That is, through the incorporation of these carbon sink initiatives into the global carbon credit markets and emissions trading schemes developed in the Paris Agreement, many Pacific nations stand to

significantly benefit from selling their surplus emissions and offsets. Further, a better understanding of these sinks is useful for scientific projections and analysis of climate change and how our actions might produce better, different, futures.

However, under colonial-capitalism, a better count of the carbon being processed in blue carbon sinks does not translate to a net increase in the amount of carbon actually being processed in the world. It instead exemplifies a logic of counting which denies disagreement in the onto-epistemic relations which bind Oceanian ways of being to its waters. It is a count of aqua nullius and reduces the ocean to a primordial commons which as commons is then subsumed under the exploitative logics of capital accumulation and military hegemony. Without action which challenges the actual consumptive, extractive, and productive capacities of colonial-capitalism, the inclusion of these credits, from a global perspective, functions only to falsely inflate the contributions of core-nations who buy these emission offsets. The vacuous, all-consuming logics of colonial-capital pervades contemporary international legal structures and systems so that they operate to obscure the actual issues and causes underpinning these consequences. As a world-system, colonial-capitalism needs to exploit, destroy, consume, and commodify everything it encounters. It is a system which then continues to prove that it is incompatible with the health of oceans on a global scale.

Then, as we see again, international legal and diplomatic mechanisms have formed as part of a police operation which ultimately strengthens colonial-capitalist hegemony and prevents contestation with its order, maintaining instead the pretence of civility and liberal democracy, of participation in the interests of capital flow. Colonial-capitalism as a system wields international legal bodies to ultimately frame contributions to the struggle against climate change through the lens of individual nation-states. This allows for a moralising of wealth and extraction in which core nations are able to reaffirm their ontological superiority and their development via their capacity to wield wealth to accrue green technology and pay for offsetting their destruction of climate, framing themselves as contributing more to the struggle against climate change. At the same time, the nations in the periphery and semi-periphery are then criticised for their inability to contribute as much to the struggle and for their lack of commitments as they struggle to develop their economies and productive capacities. Core-nations thus exert further pressure on periphery and semi-periphery nations to continue along the lines of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ as determined by core nations,

exploiting peripheral environments in the interests of profit and paradoxically in the name of the environment.

Colonial-capitalism then offers us no pathways, either through or within, by which Oceanian water relationalities can be realised and protected on a global scale. The violence of widespread consumption and environmental exploitation, a necessary condition of capitalism, renders it onto-epistemically incompatible with an Oceanian future. In knowing and understanding the current state of the oceans on a global scale and the futures projected for them, it becomes clear that to be a good ancestor, to maintain good relations with our environments and the generations to come, we must overcome colonial-capitalism. This is the truth which calls us to action; we know this situation of terra nullius is where we find ourselves today, but this knowledge must always be accompanied with the actions and beliefs which demonstrate that this does not have to be the way of things. This order can be ruptured. As a world-system colonial-capitalism offers us no solutions in the face of catastrophic climate change, instead prioritising more and more wealth extraction, ceaselessly searching for ways to consume our way out of these crises. In striving towards a new Oceania, on the scale of global ocean health it becomes clear that this system, this world is no longer compatible with such a future; as an order of social relations it has nothing to offer us except an expedited death, a more abrupt destruction of our oceans, lands, and peoples. If Oceania is the proper name for the decolonisation of the Pacific, then it necessitates a commitment to the far reaches of the 'beyond reform' space (Stein et al. 2020). Oceania then means a faith, a fidelity in the prospect of a new world, a belief in the fallibility of power, in the possibility of new social relations beyond the violence of colonial-capitalism, and a commitment to strive towards this future.

Oceania and U.S. Hegemony

Through the previous scene of global saltwater, the realities of deteriorating ocean health and the effects of colonial-capitalism through the examples of global ocean change and its consequences were examined. This was accompanied with an analysis of the ways in which modernity polices contestations and disagreements with the onto-epistemic order. Such that, through the constraints of international legal agreements and frameworks, the underlying logics of aqua nullius, preserving U.S. command of the sea, and framing the oceans as an empty commons for capital exploitation, are thus incontestable from the outset. The possibility of a disagreement on a global scale with the very structures of colonial-capitalism, cannot be expressed through the current frameworks of international law and maritime order.

In this scene, the state of the Pacific Ocean as a region, as our ancestor, our shared heritage, and as our shared gift for the generations to come, is examined to demonstrate aqua nullius' role in poisoning modernity's relationship to the Pacific Ocean. This particular analysis focuses on two core threats to the Pacific Ocean's health which demonstrate explicitly the operations of aqua nullius. In the first instance this takes the form of an analysis of the militarisation of the Pacific to maintain U.S. command of the sea. In the second, aqua nullius is examined through the commonality of the ocean being exploited for capitalist waste disposal, that is, in modernity's structural reliance on the ocean as a dump for its excess. In these two spheres then, I provide an account of how the order of aqua nullius has been established, and why it is specifically important to the colonial-capitalist world-system within the Pacific.

This examination of militarisation then draws on the analysis of command of the sea from the previous chapter to explore its role more explicitly in the Pacific region. It examines the realities of the contemporary order of international relations in the Pacific, exploring where the U.S. need for a hypermilitarized Pacific came from, what threat China represents as a competing hegemonic power, and the potential threat and consequences this situation poses to the Pacific region. In chapter 3 the functions of command of the sea and its role in developing first British and then U.S. maritime supremacy as hegemonic core-nation of colonial-capitalism was examined. In particular, it was demonstrated that the articulation of exclusive economic zones (EEZ's) via UNCLOS served to enable U.S. command of the sea

by maintaining free movement of military ships across the oceans outside the EEZ's. What is examined here is the situation that aqua nullius, through command of the sea, has given rise to in the Pacific Ocean specifically. Where, through the structures of this international economic order, and the use of Pacific islands as military bases, colonial-capitalism wields aqua nullius to set Oceania as the proxy stage for a contest over who will assert dominance as the global hegemon.

The risk this poses for the Pacific in the potential for nuclear fallout and contamination of the ocean as a byproduct of this conflict has largely been underplayed and ignored by the international community. The adoption of AUKUS, and its potential 'pillar framework,' Papua New Guinea's 'Defense Cooperation Agreement' with the U.S., and the reinforcing of U.S. and Chinese military and diplomatic agreements across the Pacific all demonstrate the growing value of the Pacific strategically. However, in framing ourselves solely in terms of strategic significance, Pacific nations become committed to the logics of aqua nullius and command of the sea, leaning into this system which only values us in terms of our use in enacting violence. This increasingly places us in precarious positions as struggles for strategic power and command of the sea play out across our oceans. What Hau'ofa (2008) calls for us to recognise is that as a collective region, Oceania wields a unifying power in our shared ancestral relationships to the ocean and our roles as its custodians. A power to rule as part of the demos, the people, as those who have as much a capacity to exercise the right to rule as anyone else (Rancière, 2010). Oceania is the assertion of our collective voices and the staking of our reality as part of the count. Oceania is the enactment of our inherent collective value as a part of the count, of our relationship to the ocean, as our world and ancestor as a primordial entity to which we belong.

I now turn to the role of aqua nullius in the context of waste in Oceania, interrogating waste first through the legacies of nuclear waste in the Pacific and then its contemporary contexts with the potential impacts of nuclear fallout, and nuclear wastewater disposal. In treating the Pacific Ocean this way, where nuclear waste is allowed to leak and be actively dumped into the sea, where plastics and rubbish are allowed to flow and accumulate in whirlpools of waste, and where the absence of jurisdictions and political force renders all this legal or invisible to the law, the realities, and consequences of aqua nullius on Oceania are demonstrated. The possibility of a disagreement, of a means of stopping the pollution of the ocean is denied from the outset in colonial-capitalism's unwillingness to conceive of the

ocean as anything more than an empty commons, subject to the 'democratic' rule of the majority. There is then, an inability of colonial-capitalism to recognise the ocean as part of our ancestral being, this being a necessary condition for any count and order which invokes the name Oceania. In reducing the ocean via aqua nullius to a site of waste disposal, colonial-capitalism renders itself incompatible with any movement towards a new Oceania. Through militarisation and waste disposal, the particular operations of aqua nullius across the Pacific are examined.

Militarisation

While climate change and its consequence will continue to play a significant role in the evolving challenges Oceania faces, an increasingly urgent threat to the possibility of a new Oceania takes the form of the growing prospect of conflict between the U.S. and China. In this, the dispute concerns the exercise of control over global flows of capital, and maritime hegemony in the form of command of the sea. China has thus continued to grow as a superpower and now appears to be challenging the U.S.'s position of global hegemon. This conflict has played out in proxy through the forging of alliances with strategically significant nation-states and the shoring up of defence capacities in certain regions. It is a conflict which has resulted in increased military presence and escalation across Oceania to preserve the interests of capital accumulation. This being done with little to no regard for the peoples of our sea of islands. Control over the Pacific Ocean today, whether exerted through outright military occupation, coercive economic pressure, or via legal colonial occupation secures American-Asian maritime trade routes for the global circulation of commodities.

To maintain its position as global hegemon, the U.S. as a nation state, secures its hegemony and interests through demonstrations of power, training exercises, and military conferences which showcase the might of the current hegemonic power and its corporate sponsors via the military industrial complex (Teaiwa, 1994). In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War U.S. hegemony was largely established through demonstrations and performances of industrial and technological superiority. This hegemony has been asserted in moments such as the 'space race' during the Cold War, where technological superiority, by which was implied a superior capacity to kill, was paraded around on the international level by nation-states to secure their positions in the global order. Key to maintaining this hegemonic order then is the implicit threat of violence which these demonstrations represent, reminding those who would oppose modernity and its colonial-capitalist world-system of the

consequences of challenging its order. Through outward displays of military capacity and threats of violence, the U.S. defends the contemporary order of the world-system, and polices the possibility of disagreement. Central to establishing this order has been the rapid development of increasingly stronger nuclear capabilities as a global 'deterrent.' To purportedly maintain peace then, the world embarked on a period of nuclear experimentation and expansion, developing the nuclear strike capacities for core-nations such as France, England, and the U.S. and policing the capacities of semi-periphery and periphery nations to embark on similar programmes. As the ultimate victors of this power struggle, the U.S. thus established themselves as global hegemon and have moved to obscure the onto-epistemic violences against the Pacific which establishes their order.

The Pacific has thus been key to securing the interests of the U.S. as hegemonic nation-state. This hegemony operates specifically according to the logics of aqua nullius to maintain narratives of the Pacific as small islands in a vast and empty sea, legitimating its violence. This perception of the Pacific as small and uninhabited islands in a vast sea was weaponised against our peoples to justify the detonation of hundreds of nuclear missiles in the Marshall Islands (Teaiwa, 1994). These islands came to be referred to by the U.S. government as the 'Pacific Proving Grounds.' Here, instead of proving the capacities of nuclear weapons, we might suggest that what the U.S. actually came to prove on these islands was its overwhelming willingness and capacity for violence to protect its position as hegemon. For the most part, our contemporary context has been shaped by expressions of military hegemony and command of the sea which tend to take the form of conferences, exercises, and events such as the 'Rim of the Pacific' (RIMPAC) shared military exercises. Through RIMPAC the U.S. and its allies engage in joint military exercises to reinforce modernity's fantasies of ontological security, projecting the imagery of a united front and maintaining the illusion of a peaceful, diplomatic global order (Case, 2020). However, the reliance on these performances to maintain the current global order betrays the reality that is an order established first in the wake of extreme violence through nuclear testing in the Pacific, and second, through the threat of violence via the continued occupation of the Pacific ocean to protect U.S. command of the sea.

Through these threats of violence, the U.S. reminds the world of the consequences of challenging its order, of the violence these nation-states are capable of wielding to ensure that their interests are secured (Kajihiro, 2013). Oceania then, due to both its supposedly isolated

and unimportant nature – the vast space which encompasses our sea of islands, but also, its importance in securing the flows of capital – its centrality to the functioning of the current colonial capitalist system (a centrality those in power are often reluctant to acknowledge), continues to struggle against the intertwining tendrils of colonialism, capitalism, and militarisation, finding itself at the centre of a struggle for global power. In this, Campling and Colas (2019) remind us that U.S. command of the sea and naval hegemony must balance the influences of capital as the organising logic of exploitation, the economic structure of the world-system, as well as the security requirements of the modern nation-states as the organising unit of the world-system. The need to balance the economic and security interests of modernity produces sometimes conflicting shifts in colonial-capitalist relations to the sea where the operations of control, dominium, and imperium clash. Overarchingly however, Campling and Colas (2019) demonstrate that these interests are subsumed under a broader logic of capitalist exploitation. In this, as capitalism faces renewed crises across the globe, the struggle over the Pacific and threat of a Chinese challenge to U.S. hegemony has rekindled conflict over the past decade. This being heavily tied to the 'Pacific Pivot' in U.S. foreign policy (Clinton, 2011), which gave rise to the subsequent increased military spending in the region and a foreign policy shift to secure the interests of U.S. capital more aggressively across Oceania (Kajihiro, 2013). In tracing how this 'pivot' and U.S. 'command of the sea' are anchored in aqua nullius and examining its ecological and existential consequences, this chapter demonstrates the material realities of aqua nullius today through militarisation, and the potential reality it holds in store for us if we allow it to continue to dominate Oceania.

The value of the Pacific to colonial-capitalism is organised into two spheres. In the first, the Pacific's value is expressed in its capacity to impose command of the sea, where its geographical and strategic significance centres its role in global security and maintaining peace. In the second, its value lies in its role as maritime highway for the circulation and transferral of commodities. Until recently, the conflict between China and the U.S. in the Pacific has played out across these different spheres, where the U.S. has continued to strengthen its position militarily, and China looks to secure its role in capitalist production and the exporting of goods. This situation has for the most part, avoided outright conflict between China and the U.S. as they are engaged in forms of imperialism which privilege the different domains of power to maintain the interests of colonial-capitalism. As the inheritors of the British Empire, the U.S. holds fast to the logics and demonstrations of imperium,

strengthening their forces and spreading their bases across the world so as to be able to control and deny access to the Pacific Ocean to protect their interests if needed. China for their part, have increasingly sought trade opportunities and diplomatic ties to secure free and global trade agreements outside of U.S. coercion, operating within the sphere of dominium, where the Pacific Ocean acts as a trade highway. The fact that this conflict plays out in these two spheres, avoiding outright violence, has resulted in some commentators framing the growing conflict over the Pacific as a 'tug-of-war' or a cold war, between these two competing superpowers. (Fong, Wu, & Nathan, 2021) (Lyons, 2022).

In this, the U.S. foreign policy relationship to Oceania has remained fundamentally the same since the early Twentieth Century, operating primarily in accordance with command of the sea and the doctrine of military occupation and domination over the sea. This framework reduces Oceania and its ancestral lands to mere numbers on a board of strategic values and interests (Kajihiro, 2013), where for example, Senator Albert Beveridge's 1900 address to the President on the 'Philippine Question' asserted that colonising the Philippines was just the U.S.'s natural "part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world." This relationship to Pacific nations and the Pacific Ocean then is still the underlying sentiment and justifications through which U.S. involvement in the Pacific today has been justified. Where command of the sea and the operations of aqua nullius necessitate a form of relating to the Pacific Ocean only as either a site of imperial conquest, a site where military capacity might be demonstrated and exercised. That is, as a site where our islands face destruction and poisoning if deemed strategic, where the ocean's value lies only in its role as a transitory space which allows for international trade. Or, as a site of commerce and trade, Beveridge (1900) further asserting that Pacific belonged to the U.S., that it was "our Ocean… the ocean of the commerce of the future." He thus asserted the importance of control over the Pacific and importance of U.S. hegemony within the region to secure global trade routes, such that "the power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world." To justify this violence against the Indigenous peoples already there, Beveridge asserted that the peoples of the Philippines for example, were "children… not capable of self-government…not of a self-governing race." This established a moral imperative for intervention, alongside the commercial and military bases. In claiming the Philippines, and staking a claim to the Pacific Ocean, Beveridge and his contemporaries argued that the U.S. was exercising its right to discovery and imperialism, and that it was

morally righteous to do so, that it was the 'White Man's Burden' to colonise the Philippines, and the Pacific Ocean (Beveridge, 1900). This 'burden' was of course accompanied by significant wealth extraction and the securing of maritime trade routes.

In 2011, this sentiment was reiterated in a widely circulated piece by then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton titled "America's Pacific Century." In her speech, against suggestions that the U.S. might shift away from imperialism and aggressive militarisation given that conflict in the Middle East was waning , Clinton (2011) argued for the importance of U.S. foreign policy refocusing towards the Pacific Ocean for the 21st Century to protect the economic interests of the U.S. noting that, "From opening new markets to American businesses to curbing nuclear proliferation to keeping the sea lanes free for commerce and navigation, our work holds the key to our prosperity and security at home." Significantly, her piece demonstrates the value with which the U.S. regards the Pacific in terms of its economic and strategic importance, however, it also betrays the ahistorical and ideological bias of U.S. narratives which allow her to claim that the U.S. has "no territorial ambitions, and a long record of providing for the common good." This sentiment though, is not shared by many across Oceania in the face of the violent atrocities and environmental destruction which has been committed in the name of this "common good". Here, Haunani-Kay Trask (1991, p.31) reminds us that for Oceania "continued American claims to political and cultural superiority are seen as merely the ideology of a colonizing power."

Indeed, one of the strategic allies Clinton (2011) names is Indonesia, describing it as one of the most "significant democratic powers in of Asia" with which they would be pursuing "broader, deeper, and more purposeful relationships." U.S. support for Indonesia, the complicit sanitising of their genocidal legacies in West Papua, reminds us that despite all pretence of defending democracy, of advocating for freedom, of standing for human rights, the underlying logic which drives their actions is the logic of endless profit accumulation. Clinton thus admits the true reason for U.S. interest in Indonesia when she notes that "the stretch of sea from the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Malacca to the Pacific contains the world's most vibrant trade and energy routes" (Clinton, 2011). The reality is that for the U.S., the value attained by securing these trade routes far outweighs any Oceanic life in the brutal calculus of capital accumulation. An arithmetic which has continued to drive the increased militarisation of the Pacific by the U.S. as they look to preserve their 'Command of the Sea' and the logics of aqua nullius.

With regards to the growing conflict across Oceania, dominium and imperium help frame U.S. hegemony and its relationship to English imperialism, allowing us to better understand the parameters of the current U.S. and Chinese conflict over the Pacific. In this the overarching English maritime hegemony, and rule by imperium of the early 20th Century, was ceded to and transferred to the U.S. in the aftermath of the Second World War and ultimately affirmed at end of the Cold War, guaranteeing U.S. 'Command of the Sea' by the end of the 20th Century. However, as Stein et al. (2017) note, the U.S. empire has entered into a stage of decline. China and a number of other nations have thus sought to undermine U.S. hegemony through the sphere of dominium, and facilitate this decline as they rise to power. Chinese militarisation across Oceania has generally paled in comparison to the U.S. with most of their primary security concerns being internal – either being domestically focused on the interests of social harmony, or, with securing access to the South China Sea (Kajihiro, 2013). Their shift toward outwardly demonstrating their capacity for a military response has been a relatively recent one, and signals the realities of the growing tensions. China has thus overwhelmingly tended to operate within the realm of dominium, with an emphasis on reinforcing existing relationships and utilising trade, diplomacy, loans, and infrastructure deals to secure their interests.

This came to a head in March 2022 when the Solomon Islands signed a security agreement with China granting them the capacity to "according to [their] own needs and with the consent of the Solomon Islands, make ship visits to carry out logistical replenishment in and have stopover and transition in the Solomon Islands." (Bagshaw, 2022; Aquora, 2021). In response, both Australia and New Zealand, seemingly acting on behalf of the interests of the U.S. and partners, have sought to reaffirm their relationships with Oceanic nations and reinforce their roles as leaders as part of "our own Pacific family" (Manch, 2022). In this respect, Australia and New Zealand utilise their diplomatic relationships with Oceania to combat China's challenges to U.S. hegemony in the realm of dominium.

The seascape has continued to shift in response to both U.S. and Chinese initiatives, while Clinton's speech in 2011 noted differences with China, and the possibility for conflict, it also reinforced a language of cooperation in the interests of global capitalism; asserting that while "[s]ome in our country see China's progress as a threat to the United States; some in China worry that America seeks to constrain China's growth... The fact is that a thriving America is good for China and a thriving China is good for America" (Clinton, 2011). This

narrative however has faced some challenges; including the continued rise of China's economy and the potential threat it represents to U.S. hegemony, the escalation of tensions under Donald Trump's presidency through the sparking of a trade-war with China, and even a resurgence Sinophobia following the COVID-19 outbreak, U.S. and Chinese relations have become increasingly strained in the decade or so since Clinton's (2011) speech (McDonagh, 2022; Boylan et al., 2021). While not in open conflict, these tensions take the form of reshuffling diplomatic ties and political manoeuvrings, the shoring up of, or declining of diplomatic relations, and allegiances in strategically significant areas across the Pacific Ocean. In May 2022 China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, embarked on a tour through the Pacific, securing and signing multiple bilateral agreements with a number of Pacific Islands, and strengthening China's power through dominium across Oceania, where many of the agreements were focused on trade and infrastructure support. In response, U.S. speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022, a move which itself sparked a range of responses from the Chinese Government, including potential withdrawals from trade and climate agreements (Milman, 2022). This deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations has been marked by escalating challenges to each other's sphere of influence, with the U.S. looking to challenge China's manoeuvres within the sphere of dominium, and China increasingly indicating a willingness to challenge U.S. imperium, a shift which was explicitly demonstrated in a further response to Pelosi's diplomatic visit to Taiwan where China also 'test-fired' missiles in waters near Taiwan, and began engaging in military drills and exercises around the island.

The U.S. pivot has also been demonstrated through tighter alliances forming around China, including stronger relationships with Australia and New Zealand who serve as the arbiters of U.S. dominium in Oceania. This taking the form of trade or security and intelligence agreements through which their [capital's] 'shared interests' are protected. This was explicitly articulated by the White House in its February 2022 report on the 'Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States' which noted that "integrated deterrence will be the cornerstone of our approach. We will more tightly integrate our efforts across warfighting domains and the spectrum of conflict to ensure that the United States, alongside our allies and partners, can dissuade or defeat aggression in any form or domain" (National Security Council, 2022). Further stating that they "will drive initiatives that reinforce deterrence and counter coercion… opposing efforts to alter territorial boundaries or undermine the rights of

sovereign nations at sea" (Ibid). We see then, an escalation both in language and in actions as challenges to U.S. command of the sea from China are met with increasingly militaristic responses.

What exactly then does that mean, what is the reality of these statements for Oceania and its peoples? In 2023, the on-going consequences of this shift in U.S. policy are in full effect through the role of USINDOPACOM, or, the United States Indo-Pacific Command, which consists of some 375,000 personnel. The U.S. Pacific fleet alone comprises some 200 ships, 1,100 aircraft, and 130,000 sailors and civilians (USINDOPACOM, 2023). Its presence in Oceania is not a welcome one, from the use of live ammunition in military exercises whose sounds still haunt the children who grew up with them, to the stealing of sacred lands for their bases, from the dumping of toxic waste into waterways and holes, to the unwillingness to take responsibility for the nuclear waste from their experiments, it is clear that the U.S. military will not be our saviour (Trask, 1999; Teaiwa, 2001; Osorio, 2011). As has been documented in fact, the U.S. military is one of the most significant contributors to climate change alone (Belcher, Bigger, Neimark & Kennelly, 2020). The military-industrial complex which drives the sentiments expressed by Clinton (2011) in her address, rather than hoping for an end of conflict and environmental exploitation, instead relishes the possibility of defence spending to protect their interests, and perhaps even, the possibility of outright conflict with China.

AUKUS

As tensions continue to escalate in the Pacific then, the prospect of outright conflict, of a hot war, becomes increasingly plausible with both the U.S. and China signalling a willingness to continue to escalate their operations and challenge each other's supremacy in the region. The U.S. and its allies have thus continued to ramp up their spending in the Pacific and have increasingly sought to strengthen and reinforce their alliances in Oceania exerting diplomatic pressure to deter any challenges to their hegemonic position. Australia in particular has increasingly committed itself to defending U.S. interests in the region, a commitment reiterated in its signing of the trilateral AUKUS pact in 2021, which will see the United Kingdom and the United States assist Australia in acquiring nuclear powered submarines (de Jong & Rata, 2023). Further, in October 2022, the Australian Government announced U.S. military funded plans to upgrade the Tindal airbase in Northern Territory, with current designs including the capacity to accommodate nuclear-capable B-52 bombers

(Grigg et al., 2022). The finalisation of AUKUS and the proposal of pillar systems through which New Zealand and other Pacific nations might join the military pact, as well as the signing of defence agreements such as the one between Papua New Guinea and the U.S. discussed in the previous chapter, all point towards the growing possibility of extreme naval violence in the Pacific. Particularly as some of these agreements serve to heighten concerns of violations of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone treaty, and the broader commitments of the Pacific to preventing the proliferation of nuclear power, weapons, delivery, and surveillance systems. In this, concerns are still being raised by a number of nations across Oceania as to whether or not these agreements violate these treaties and their commitments. The threat of war being exacerbated by the prospect of nuclear-powered conflict in our oceans, where the sinking of a single ship could have irrevocable consequences on our communities.

Aside from the prospect of a 'hot' war in the Pacific and the disastrous consequences prolonged conflict across Oceania would have on the environment and our peoples, the mere presence of these military bases in Indigenous Oceania territories carry with them a number of other significant costs and consequences. This has been increasingly exemplified in both Hawai'i and around the world where the presence of military bases has had disastrous social and ecological consequences on Kānaka Maoli and Indigenous peoples (Kajihiro, 2013). In particular, the ecological destruction and disruption of native flora and fauna, and the widespread destruction of Indigenous ways of being, manifested both in clearing space for these bases in the first instance and continued through their ongoing training and exercises, traumatises Kānaka youth and their ways of relating to the world. These are issues Hawai'i faces as a direct result of U.S. occupation and militarisation across Oceania (Kajihiro, 2013; Trask, 1999). These consequences have also included the accidental leaking and deliberate dumping of hazardous chemicals by the military into Hawaiian waters, as well as increases in sexual violence (Trask, 1999; Enloe, 2014; Ramones, 2014). We must be clear in targeting the logics which inform and underpin U.S. exceptionalism and command of the sea across Oceania, that it is precisely in their inability to see the ocean as something other than a commons, their inability to see the oceans value outside the logics of imperium and dominium, and their adherence to aqua nullius, that these forms of violence can and will continue to persist. It becomes apparent then, that a new Oceania requires nothing less than the cessation of U.S and Chinese militarisation of the Pacific. Where the militarisation of the

Pacific thus threatens our everyday ways of being, our ways of relating to the world, a new Oceania requires the abolition of U.S. hegemony and colonial-capitalism as our world system, the abolition of aqua nullius as the dominant form of water relationality.

Waste

The second site of analysis of the state and health of Oceanian saltwater, which demonstrates the prevalence of the logics of aqua nullius, is waste. For wansolwara, the problem of waste takes two forms, the first is through the disposal of military and nuclear waste, where the histories of nuclear armament in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the legacies of biological and chemical weapons continue to poison our ecosystems and people. The second is in the form of plastic waste, capitalist consumption, and its Oceanian legacies through the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch.' Wherein the structural and systemic reduction of the Pacific Ocean to an excess space where waste can be stored, demonstrates precisely the operations of aqua nullius and onto-epistemic framing of the world which denies the ocean its onto-epistemic capacity as a site of being.

Through the imagery of the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch' consumption and excess waste under capitalism and its consequences for Oceania are explored (Lebreton et al., 2018). As well as this, the solutions proposed by capital, exemplified in the proposed Plastics Resolution, their long-term implications and underlying commitments to aqua nullius are interrogated. In the second instance, through the effects of nuclear and military waste in the Marshall Islands, Hawai'i, and Pacific Ocean from U.S. and Japan, and their continued consequences for Oceania, the role of aqua nullius in reducing the Pacific Ocean to a chemical and radioactive dumping ground is examined. Thus, whether from direct exposure to radiation during nuclear missile testing in the latter half of the 20th Century, or from the continued leaking of radioactive and biochemical waste into the Pacific Ocean, colonial-capitalist states have repeatedly demonstrated an inability to honour and respect our ancestors, both those who came before us and those who will come after. As a site, or scene of aqua nullius, waste demonstrates yet another critical moment in which the logics of aqua nullius – where a form of water relationality which denies water the possibility as a site of being and belonging is privileged – has had violent consequences for Oceania and our Pacific Ocean. In this, aqua nullius functions to preserve the interests of capital as it is precisely

because capital refuses to deal with the excess, with the hidden costs in maintaining its stability, that it requires sites of ontological occlusion and denial.

The ‘Great Pacific Garbage Patch’ or ‘Pacific Trash Vortex’ generally refers to the stretch of water in the North Pacific Ocean between Japan and North America, which, due to a number of factors including the subtropical convergence zone (where the warm waters of the South Pacific meet the cool waters of the arctic) and global oceanic current convergence, results in the accumulation of much of the world’s plastic waste in eastern and western gyres; whirlpools or vortexes of microplastics and debris (Lebreton, et al., 2018; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2023). While larger debris such as plastic bags and nets pose significant risks to the biodiversity in the region, the presence of masses of microplastics in these ocean systems are posed to present an unprecedented threat to global biodiversity.

Microplastics refer to the microscopic plastic particles that result from the ‘breakdown’ of plastic into smaller and smaller particles, in this, the particles are photodegrading rather than biodegrading or decomposing, meaning that their molecular composition is retained (Ding et al., 2022). These microplastics then, pose risks to Oceanic and global biodiversity through two mechanisms. The first is through the build-up and presence of these microplastics in food and water sources, accumulating and being consumed up trophic levels affecting global biodiversity. With the presence of microplastics in the Ocean even into the atmospheric and climatological water cycles, in this, the relatively new phenomena of ‘plastic rain’ have started to impact our environments (Ding et al., 2022). The second is in the prospective impact microplastics are having on plankton and other oceanic microorganisms which form the critical bases of a number of ecosystems and nutrient cycles. This results from the microplastics in these regions forming a film, or layer of plastics, which seemingly block out much of the light required by photosynthesising microorganisms such as phytoplankton to subsist. The absence of this sunlight and thus phytoplankton contributing further to the prevalence of oceanic deserts and nutrient dead spaces.

For me, the relationship between waste disposal and aqua nullius was made explicit on a trip back to Papua New Guinea in 2011. Alongside the many beautiful encounters and environments, I was also struck by the prevalence of rubbish and plastics which along the coasts and the beaches we travelled to. Even in our traditional beaches far away from the city, there was still waste. While the reasons for the waste problems in Papua New Guinea are

complex and varied themselves, where whether from a lack of infrastructure, the nature of global ocean currents, or spiritual and cultural belief systems, the problem of waste is significant, and particular to colonial-capitalism. The waste issue in Papua New Guinea is reflective of the general realities of this world-system imposed via neo-colonialism which is that it is incapable of actually dealing with its consequences. In this, we must be clear that the waste problems in Oceania, rather than being a result of Oceanian actions, instead reflect the broader inability of capital to deal with its waste, its excess. They are thus snapshots of the overarching problem of waste in a colonial-capitalist system, the realities of an imposed system which privileges more and more consumption over our environments, lives, and native species. A system which has affected our environments so much that our waste has can be found in some of the most inhospitable and isolated locations, such as the literal bottom of the ocean in the form of the Mariana Trench, or remote islands such as Trindade Island off the coast of Brazil (Chiba & Saito, et al. 2018) (Berger, 2023). Modernity's waste problem is the product of colonial-capitalism as a system which prioritises consumption, growth, and exploitation above all. This has been further reiterated in the refusal of periphery nations to continue taking other nations' waste, such as Thailand's proposed ban on plastic waste imports. As such, these growing resistances to the disposal of waste in periphery and semi-periphery nations are reflective of both a refusal of these logics, and an inability of the capitalist free market to solve its waste problems.

As many nations are aware, the problem of plastic waste and its ongoing consequences pose significant questions for all of us, including the very real prospect of inter-generational impacts to continued plastic pollution. This came to a head at the United Nations Environment Assembly in March of 2022, where a broad coalition of countries across the world committed themselves to working towards a global agreement, or treaty, which would monitor and aim to reduce marine plastic pollution to be finalised in 2024 (United Nations Environment Assembly, 2022). Marine plastic pollution, and the global prevalence of microplastics, has thus motivated a number of nation states to take action towards reducing the amount of plastic and rubbish we are dumping in the ocean. However, as it stands, the proposed treaty appears to represent a fundamental reassertion of the logics of aqua nullius, demonstrating the structural limits embedded within institutions such as the United Nations and their inescapable commitment to the interests of capital. In this, one of the key questions underpinning regulatory systems and proposed treaties such as this, is the

pervasive reality that they lack any power or authority in the modern global context to enforce their agreements and recommendations. Further, these treaties fundamentally reinforce the logics of the nation-state, treating plastic production and consumption as fundamentally the problems of individual nation-states, with each state articulating their ambitions and goals, and demonstrating how well they have adhered to these through events such as COP.

This is problematic in that the overemphasis of nation-state actors in the production of global plastics, often leads to an overlooking of the fundamentally globalised nature of capital and capitalist production which underpins modernity. Thus, with the off-shoring of production that rose through the expansion of neo-liberal capitalism, the associated environmental costs and consequent responsibilities were also off-shored, relocated to non-White/European nations where the environments and labour could be exploited further. This has unfortunately led to a form of moralising with regards to nation-states in the Global South as they function today as the production sites of modern day capital. While the full text of the treaty is yet to be negotiated, the systemic constraints of institutions such as the United Nations and its adherence to the interests of colonial-capitalism as mechanisms of the police order, suggests that it will only serve to reinforce aqua nullius. It seems likely that this agreement will reinforce the consequences of aqua nullius and the systems of waste disposal under capital which pollutes and threatens the health of our waters. Again, aqua nullius as a police operation of colonial-capitalism imposes barriers within the international legal context, offering us with neither legal, nor 'legitimate' paths beyond its violence.

Conclusion

In this section, the image of Venus which frames the onto-epistemic violence of colonial-capitalism to the oceans, facilitated a navigation of the realities and implications of aqua nullius. Venus is invoked here through the scene of Captain Cook's first colonial mission into the Pacific to observe its transit and represents colonial-capitalist relations to the oceans. Chapter three first focused on demonstrating what aqua nullius is in terms of framing the ocean as a site devoid and antithetical to being. It traced how this logic came to define modernity's social relations, and the numerous instances in which aqua nullius has been enshrined and defended as part of the police order of modern international legal frameworks. It thus emphasises the ways in which aqua nullius developed out of the international order

established in the Doctrine of Discovery. Chapter three thus linked the English reformation and the imposition of aqua nullius showing how the need to reconfigure the international order, facilitated the formation of the Pax Brittanica, that is, British and naval and military hegemony. It then demonstrated how this influenced the U.S. rise to power, inheriting the position of hegemon and the British reliance on aqua nullius to maintain the flows of capital and ensure onto-epistemic security. Finally, the modern context is explored in which aqua nullius has come to condition almost all contemporary forms of ocean relationality. This being the result of UNCLOS and the development of the modern order of peace as conditional on the free movement of the U.S. military outside of national EEZ's. What this ultimately shows is that modern international peace and law are fundamentally established on a threat of violence. They are established on aqua nullius and the ontological negation and denial of water's reality as a part of Oceanian being, and as such, are incompatible with any movement towards a new Oceania.

This is further reiterated in chapter four, where the explicit consequences of aqua nullius and colonial-capitalisms prospective futures are examined. In the first instance, the consequences of aqua nullius on a global environmental scale are determined. This is established by drawing on the UNFCCC's 'SROCC' which compiles a metanalysis of climate change research to show the reality of our modern world-system and its effects on the ocean. Aqua nullius is shown to have been critical in exacerbating the effects oceanic climate change such as ocean acidification, ocean warming, and ocean desertification by inhibiting and obscuring international responses to these consequences. The centring of aqua nullius in our international order, and its reduction of the oceans to an extra-legal sphere, a vast space which is antithetical to the expression of rights, has meant that the prospect of intervening against colonial-capitalism for its treatment of the oceans is impossible legally. As well as this, both the financial costs under capitalism, and its reliance on international waters as the highway for capital flow increasingly disincentives resistance to this order.

The Pacific Ocean's particular experience with aqua nullius comes in the form of the U.S. prioritisation of the Pacific as a theatre of war and geopolitical conflict. Aqua nullius thus informs the U.S. conception of the Pacific Ocean as only having strategic value. In this framing, the U.S. employs imperium is to maintain the oceans as a commons, a site of contestation where 'might is right' determines the political order in the absence of an appropriate legal schema. Against this, China emphasises dominium and the logics of

occupation and control to maintain its position as a growing global superpower. Aqua nullius functions in the Chinese conception of the Pacific through asserting its value only in its reality as a vast empty space through which commodities and the interests of capital can flow. While the U.S. has emphasised the importance of controlling the Pacific to ensure hegemony since the early 20th century, the rise of China as a potential threat to U.S. power has encouraged a more direct application of imperium across the Pacific to assert its dominance.

Implicit but key to this order has been the onto-epistemic reduction of the Pacific Ocean through aqua nullius, developing modernity's relationship to it as a vast empty space in which the world is able to dump its excess and waste. Through their rise to power the U.S. utilised these logics to justify first its nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific, and second, its decision to simply store the by-product, the waste of these experiments in the form of hazardous radioactive material, in a concrete dome in the Marshall Islands. This order has continued in the modern context with both nuclear wastewater dumping, and the growing prospect of outright conflict between China and the U.S. posing serious risks to the Pacific Ocean's health. Where with the increased presence of nuclear powered submarines as a result of agreements like AUKUS, contribute the reality of near catastrophic consequences for the Pacific if even one were to sink. Oceania's capacity to ensure a healthy future, a healthy oceans for the Oceanian generations that will come after us are thus seriously jeopardised by colonial-capitalism. This treatment of the ocean, as a vast empty commons under aqua nullius, has also continued in non-military spheres. Where today, the ocean is overarchingly utilised by capital as a site of waste disposal, a site in which the excess production of capital can be dumped and forgotten about. International attempts to navigate and prevent the dumping of waste under modernity's police logics, ignore the possibility that this a structural consequence of colonial-capitalism. This results in the international order organising its resistance solely on the scale of individual nation-states, allowing a reinvigorated moralisation of the wealth accumulated by Europe and America through their legacies of colonial dispossession and genocide. Such that the U.S. for example, can afford to offset its emissions through carbon markets, allowing it to claim it is reducing emissions while continuing capitalist production all around the world.

This shift in water relationality signalled by aqua nullius has produced increasingly volatile and catastrophic consequences for Oceania. At the same time, the modern world-system is maintained by police operations which deny the possibility by continually

reframing structural issues as being particular to individual nation-states. In doing so, it becomes clear that if we are to protect our oceans, protect our seas, then we can no longer rely on international diplomatic mechanisms to defend them. If we are to be the custodians of the ocean Hau'ofa (2008) calls us to be. If we are preserve and strengthen Indigenous Oceanian water relations, and begin to move towards a new Oceania, we must overturn U.S. hegemony and aqua nullius as the organising logics of modernity. To be good custodians of the Pacific Ocean, we must be willing to confront the colonial-capitalist logics which necessitate violence and exploitation of the seas and overcome them. We must leave aqua nullius in the past and move towards new forms of organising international order. This is what a new Oceania require of us.

Koreri

As a Biak Island (West Papuan) term which comes to signify both a new world and the story of Morning Star legend, Koreri is appealed to here in the analysis of a second onto-epistemic barrier of colonial-capitalism which prevents the realisation of a new Oceania. Namely, white supremacy. It represents a form of relationality which necessitates an interrogation of the understanding of Oceanian difference, a difference which obfuscates and denies the value of black being, denies the humanity of Melanesia. Koreri thus introduces the imposition of white supremacist logics across the Pacific as a necessary condition of colonial-capitalism and its denial of Black Oceanian subjectivity. For the Biak and a number of communities across West Papua, the relationship between Koreri and Morning Star is of critical importance. Morning Star is included in the West Papuan flag of independence as the "symbolic beacon of their independence" which "will ultimately guide them out from under their ongoing colonization" such that it has come to represent the freedom and liberation of West Papua from Indonesian violence (Webb-Gannon, 2021, p.2).

The decision to incorporate it as the West Papuan symbol of liberation was derived from the traditional Biak Koreri movement. In the Koreri legend, Morning Star represents the spirit of change and the possibility of a new world, a new way of relating to each other. The particular legend which informs the inclusion of Morning Star imagery, describes the figure of Sampari, the Morning Star, who is caught stealing from a Biak elder, Manarmakeri. To make up for his transgression, Sampari offers Manarmakeri the knowledge for "resurrection of the dead and the coming of Koreri" (Kama, 1972, p.31). Here then, Koreri speaks to a type of utopian world-view, a 'heaven on earth,' a future world in which West Papuans are free, treated with dignity, and receive the respect they deserve as human beings (Webb-Gannon, 2021). Manarmakeri, having received this knowledge from Sampari, but being rejected by his people due to an illness, left Biak Island before sharing this knowledge. The followers of the Koreri movement hold to the belief that one day Morning Star will return, that Koreri "will manifest as a decolonized West Papua" where Morning Star is "Koreri's ultimate enabler" (Webb-Gannon, 2021, p.3). Koreri thus speaks to a possible future, a possible world in which West Papua is free, a world in which the Morning Star invites us to go beyond pessimistic realities. In this respect, Koreri can be understood as a call to decolonisation, a call to challenge and overcome the violent logics which facilitate Indonesian occupation and genocide against the West Papuans.

To do this, this section provides an account of the ways in which the West Papuan struggle for liberation fits within the broader struggle for a new Oceania, contending that any claim to Oceania as a collective regional identity, which does not include West Papuan liberation is a false claim. A claim rooted in white supremacy. Consequently, it is my position that Oceania, as the proper name for decolonisation of the Pacific, is only truly realised in a concept of the Pacific which has fully divested from and abolished the legacies of white supremacy. In chapter five 'Towards a Black Oceania', I introduce the question of difference as a critical quandary at the heart of Hau'ofa's concept of a new Oceania. I thus show how the navigation of difference and the multiplicity of Oceanian being is a core issue for Oceanian liberation. In particular, I highlight how Hau'ofa is called to consider and navigate the totality of differences which comprise Oceania, a task which underpins much of his writings as he looks to develop new collective identities. In this I note that a critical difference which is somewhat absent from Hau'ofa's analysis concerns the nature of race, of Black existence, and Black being in Oceania. This having particular relevance given the white supremacist foundations of colonial-capitalism which deny the possibility of Black Oceanian being and ontological capacity in the world today. This requires a stretching of Hau'ofa to highlight the specific reality of the racial superstructure of white supremacy which denies Black life its ontological possibility. This is done by tracing the historical contexts which gave rise to the colonisation of West Papua. I thus examine how West Papua's occupation has been justified and how its particular forms of colonisation and occupation developed out of global shifts in social relations to and perceptions of Black life.

As a system which was established on the slave trade, the historical and contemporary violences committed against Black life since the 1600s, colonial-capitalism is shown to be incapable of recognising the onto-epistemic reality and value of Black being (Campling and Colás, 2021). This is precisely as modernity is established on historic logics and legacies of white supremacy which were critical to the development of modern day capitalism and functioned to moralise and justify the extreme acts of violence committed by colonial agents and their slave traders. In this, I introduce the notion of 'Black Oceania' as a concept which names and emphasises the differences specific to Black being in Oceania, differentiating it from the rest of Oceania on the grounds of its specific ontological reality. This is reinforced through Quito Swan's (2022) demonstration of the links between Black struggles across the Pacific including the West Papuan struggle for liberation specifically,

and global Black struggles against white supremacy. In particular, what Swan highlights is the ways in which West Papuan liberation fighters have and continue to appeal to global communities of Black resistance, calling for solidarity from other Black nations. Recognising the similarities and differences between these struggles, I look to the radical anti-colonial and Black liberation traditions to demonstrate the ontological violence of white supremacy, and offer a path forward. Namely, I show how the same systems of Black oppression have been weaponised across the world to maintain a hegemonic order of white supremacy, which structurally denies Black life. These systems producing situations of social, or ontological death, and necropolitics where Black being can only be interpreted by the colonial-capitalist world through its death and suffering. In this, even in its suffering and death, Black being is denied and obscured, where our deaths and suffering are rationalised and justified by the modern police order (Mbembe, 2019).

In chapter six "A Morning Star to Come" this thesis recognises the global nature of white supremacy and the critical importance of solidarity between Black experiences to oppose these logics. To do this, it draws on theories from the radical Black tradition and their responses to colonial and imperial violence to examine what is at stake in a new Oceania which can overcome white supremacy in the Pacific. This is done not to homogenise Black experiences and simply transcribe Black theory into the Oceanian context. Rather, this chapter asks what do these analyses tell us about the nature of the white supremacist world, and what might they have to offer the ongoing struggle for a new Oceania, as well as what the ongoing struggle for a new Oceania might offer them. In this respect, it moves through the négritude movement, and Cesaire's (1950) analysis of colonialism and its consequences on both the colonised, and colonising subject. This is done to highlight both the importance of culture and aesthetics in constructing new identities against colonialism, but also, to recall Fanon's (1963) critique that as an irrational organism, colonialism is incapable of thinking, incapable of interpreting said aesthetic pieces and ceremonies through a logic which recognises their ontological reality.

Building on Fanon's analysis and his assertions of the importance of violent struggle against the colonial powers as the only means by which Black being can be asserted, this chapter also recognises the need for militant resistance to colonial-capitalism. Where Fanon's (1963) militant rejection of the onto-epistemic structures of colonial-capitalism is crucial to the formation of the Afro-pessimist tradition which holds there are no legal systems, no

languages, structures, or mechanisms by which Black being could be expressed as holding ontological value (Wilderson, 2018). The Afro-pessimist tradition thus evolves out of Fanon's position that colonialism is incapable of responding to anything other than violence, where it is only through the militant and active forcing of one's being into reality, that black being can reconfigure the order of colonial-capitalism. In this, Warren (2017) offers an account of ontological terror which builds on Fanon to demonstrate the reality that the modern order is metaphysically established against black being. Modernity does not just deny the ontological possibility of black ~~being~~ rather, the very order of the world is conditional on its metaphysical denial.[6] Where black ~~being~~ comes to represent absolute terror in the white conscience. This is the reality of a world which is critically established on the onto-epistemic oppression and execution of black ~~being~~ from the very outset. What is made clear is that, since the 17th century, a police logic of colonial-capitalism has functioned to not only deny black life its ontological possibility, but also to construct it as the absence or antithesis of being, the negation of being. For Gillespie (2019) this results in an account of resistance grounded in a nihilistic absurdism, a resistance which leans into the absurdity and impossibility of the context and seeks to 'die lit' or weaponise its death in the interests of enacting ontological terror, striking at separability and humanism key structures for maintain modernity's fantasy of ontological security.

Ultimately under the framing of Koreri and the struggle for a free West Papua, I argue that this world is, by its very metaphysical and onto-epistemic order, at best hostile to black being, at worst, antithetical to the possibility of black ~~being~~ from the outset. Thus, if we contend that appeals to a new Oceania must account for Oceania in its multiplicity and its differences, the assertion of a new Oceania must include Black Oceania. And we recognise that the current world order in the Pacific is established on a logic which denies black being its onto-epistemic reality, what becomes increasingly apparent is that this world must be abolished. Colonial-capitalism demonstrates that its adherence to systems of white supremacist violence, has nothing to offer Oceania but division against itself – the severance of Black Oceanian experiences, and the genocide of our peoples. Koreri thus invokes the

[6] Warren writes ~~being~~ under erasure to demonstrate the broken nature of its application. That, as a signifier ~~being~~ is expressed as a gesture towards non-being, to the antithesis of being, the negative condition for all articulations of being. Such that all forms of metaphysical or ontological relationality under colonial-capitalism, are conditioned.

need for a new world, an Oceania free of the ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological barriers of colonial-capitalism.

5. Towards a Black Oceania

In this chapter, an account of the ontological and epistemological violences embedded in the racialisation of Black existence across the Pacific is examined. Asking what are the consequences of colonial white supremacist logics in the Pacific, and in particular how do they relate to Hau'ofa's call to a new Oceania. Here then, the dreams of a future 'new' Oceania, central to Hau'ofa's project, are brought into conversation with the stark realities of the onto-epistemic violences of white supremacy as an inherent component of colonial-capitalism, violences which shape and condition Black experiences across the Pacific. This is done with the belief that an Oceania which excludes Melanesia, which excludes West Papua, cannot be anything other than false Oceania. In its adherence to white supremacist violence which opposes Black Oceania life, it shows itself to be another logic which Oceania is not. An Oceania without West Papua, without Melanesia is a palatable image to gesture to, an image which uses the name Oceania to speak to its supposedly collective nature. However, it is only ever an image or gesture which fails to enact Oceania and Oceanian relationalities in their totalities, which fails to realise the structural violence it has established itself on.

Beginning with an analysis and account of the problem of difference within Hau'ofa's call for a new Oceania, first through relationships of cultural difference and second through the mechanisms of spatio-temporal difference, this chapter complicates his project through an analysis of the realities of Black life, and what the ontological and epistemological conditions of Black difference mean for a new Oceania. In particular, this chapter explores the interwoven nature of both Black and Indigenous struggle embodied in the experience of Black Oceania and the critical imperatives which we can derive from their shared struggles. At the same time however, this chapter explicitly notes that Blackness as an ontological condition is fundamentally intertwined with and shaped by one's particular context, shaped by its multiplicities and intersections. In this respect, the Black experience is not examined as a monolith in which certain traditions of Black theory can simply be transposed or imposed on to other experiences. Rather, this chapter weaves together the lessons of the radical Black tradition and its analyses of the Black existence in a world established on white supremacy and colonial capitalism, on its exclusion.

This chapter examines the lessons embedded in the radical Black tradition and its analyses of the functions of ontological denial and death as critical conditions of Black being in the world of modernity. Questioning how, and in what ways these struggles can inform and facilitate the struggle for liberation across Black Oceania, what can these traditions teach us about the complexities of decolonising and fighting against colonialism in all its forms, about the stakes of Black struggle for liberation. In particular, it faces head on the 'Gordian knot' or tension of ontological death in Oceania, of the prospect that in this world there is no possibility of life for Black being, and asks how Oceania, in its Blackness, might navigate a path through these tensions. Giving an overview of the history of the colonisation of West Papua, this chapter demonstrates key moments and instances in which Black being in West Papua underwent processes of reification and dehumanisation in the interests of capital and imperial exploitation and how West Papua has resisted these processes. Further, this piece moves to demonstrate the material reality and persistence of a Black Oceania, of radical anti-colonial traditions grounded in shared Black resistance to white supremacy and open up the question of Black Oceanic subjectivity/Being against these structures.

I conclude this chapter then with some reflections on the nature of ontological negation and denial that structures the colonial world. In this it recognises through the work of Cesaire (1950), Fanon (1963), Wilderson (2020) and Warren (2018), the necessity of a call to end the world. In this it recognises the ontological and metaphysical realities of colonial-capitalisms world, and in recognising understands the need to surpass it, to confine this world to history, and invite something better, something grounded in our Indigenous oceanic relation ties. In recognition of the ontological and metaphysical inability for colonial-capitalism to consider Oceania in its multiplicity and difference human, this thesis maintains that a new Oceania, is in fundamental opposition to this world's very foundational concepts of being and existence of this world. Acknowledging the need to go beyond, to end this world then, it examines through Gillespie (2017) the notion of ontological-terror and the prospect of leaning into one's ontological death in the world, embracing the nihilistic absurdity of this reality. Building on the absurd nature of responses to the issue of Black being in a world opposed to it, this chapter ends with a comment on the need for irrational responses to colonial-capitalism. This position being grounded in the recognition that this world determines what is rational as part of the police operation to obscure and illegitimate disagreement with its order. In this it acknowledges the importance of the fundamentally

irrational nature of any response which serves to rupture the police count and order of modernity. Questioning what an irrational move to a new Oceania might look like.

Hau'ofa's Difference

First however, I want to introduce the question, or issue of difference at the heart of Hau'ofa's work. This is done through a reflection on the multiple ways in which the question of difference underpins his body of work. Audre Lorde (1984) emphasises throughout her work that how we relate to difference, between other communities and withing our own communities, is one of the most important questions for organising and struggling against colonial-capitalism. Similarly, Rancière (2016) notes, the question of difference, of navigating the multiplicity of the world, is one of the more fundamental questions of any political projects, insofar as politics is the act of disrupting a count, a police order. Oceania is thus a political claim, that asserts the reality of our existence as a collective, as a movement. Oceania, as a way of collectively organising ourselves is therefore called to interrogate how as a collective, we can come to navigate our differences, our multiplicities.

To develop the question of difference in Oceania then, I here examine two ways in which Hau'ofa interrogates the role and functions of difference in his notion of a new Oceania. In my reading of Hau'ofa's struggle for a 'new Oceania' examined in chapter two, I noted that in '*The New South Pacific Society*' (2008) one of the more significant critiques Hau'ofa levels against this new 'South Pacific society,' was that these types of collective identity fundamentally imposed forms of cultural homogeneity which undermined and ignored the realities of the majority of Pacific experiences. That is, in a bid to appease the colonial sensibilities of Australia and New Zealand's representatives, this 'new society' sought to emphasise forms of cultural expression and ceremony which were, Hau'ofa (2008) notes, seemingly opposed to or at the very least misrepresentative of the traditions, ceremonies, and cultural expressions that the majority of the people of the Pacific, the poor, the working class, and the excluded, actually sought to preserve and continue. What I think is significant here in Hau'ofa's articulation of a problematic collective Pacific identity, is the identification of a critical relationship between the imposition of a hegemonic and collectivising economic system or order, which simultaneously enforces a homogenous cultural order. This homogenous collective Pacific identity is one which is fundamentally incapable of accounting for and navigating the multiplicity and difference which constitutes

the reality of Pacific existence. It is one in which 'difference' can only be interpreted and made sense of across a hierarchical schema of power relations.

For Hau'ofa, the role of difference and diversity in his conceptualisation of a new Oceania, presents a critical knot he was continually confronted with. Through the essays, '*The Ocean in Us*' (TOiU) and '*Pasts to Remember*' (PTR) Hau'ofa offers us two frameworks or pathways by which the tensions of difference and unity might be navigated. In TOiU Hau'ofa begins to build a framework and theory through which he hoped to bring together and help foster collective understandings of Oceanic futures which navigated our differences and multiplicities. In this, the question of navigating our cultural and national differences as a collective Oceania are interrogated through the framework of ocean relationality, and the unifying realisation of this shared reality. In PtR Hau'ofa articulates the stakes and consequences of relationships to time and space imposed on Oceania by modernity, the ways in which it shapes and limits Oceanic imaginaries, and possibilities. Here Hau'ofa looks to reconfigure and reconceptualise how Oceanic pasts, presents, and futures are understood, interrogating the possibility of both new and remembered ways of thinking Oceanic existence. In PtR then, I contend that Hau'ofa is again faced with the question of navigating difference, and the possibility of unknowability, suggesting a reconceptualising of the spatio-temporal constraints modernity imposes on Oceanic existence. This gesture towards an environmental or ecological notion of time and space demonstrates another of Hau'ofa's engagements with the question of difference through a recognition of the cyclical and fundamentally intertwined and interrelated nature of our realities prior to and beyond colonisation. A way of relating to time which facilitates the navigation of our differences and multiplicities in its capacity to reconstitute and resituate our pasts. Through each of these texts, we see the presence of the tensions of navigating difference and unity, of the vast multiplicity of Oceania, and the possibility of moving through these tensions together as a collective new Oceania. Where "in order to give substance to a common regional identity and animate it, we must tie history, and culture to empirical reality and practical action" (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.55).

Hau'ofa often warns against what he saw as shallow attempts at collectivising Pacific identity through an emphasis of difference for differences sake, employed by the University of the South Pacific in its early years. The development of the 'Pacific Way,' was described by Hau'ofa as a "half-hearted attempt … by some rather unconvinced politicians and regional

academics to provide a form of ideology and identity for regional unity amongst Polynesians, Melanesians, and Micronesians." It fundamentally represented the desires of "regional elites" rather than the "island societies at large." (Hau'ofa, 1985, p.168) As such, the form of Pacific regional identity it encouraged was tailored towards protecting the interests of neocolonialism, producing precisely the forms of cultural homogeneity Hau'ofa critiqued in his *TNSPS*. Reflecting on his time at the University of the South Pacific and his role in the establishing of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, I here examine how the question of navigating cultural difference and multiplicity function within Hau'ofa's call to a new Oceania. In particular, Hau'ofa notes that the notion of the 'Pacific Way' was articulated to try and weave together the multiplicity of Pacific identities present at the university in its early years, however, that this project struggled and ultimately failed to navigate the tensions between attempting to derive unity from emphasising difference. In this, the University of the South Pacific's staging of events such as 'Pacific Week' which was an opportunity for performers to showcase their traditional and ceremonial dances failed to recognise according to Hau'ofa (2008, p.43) "the irony or promoting both the Pacific Way and the Pacific Week… in the hope that unity would somehow emerge from diversity." What is fundamentally at issue for Hau'ofa here was that any sense of collective identity, of "unity derived from the enjoyment of the… music and dances of the region was tenuous because no serious attempt was made to translate them or place them in their historical and social contexts" (Ibid, p.43). The emphasis of the diversity and difference which constitutes the Pacific, the simple recognition of its reality, its existence, ultimately languished in the face of competing national interests as neoliberalism and its overemphasis of the nation-state, sought to continually divide the nations of the Pacific against ourselves.

Hau'ofa notes in *TOiU* that these attempts to collectivise the Pacific have all fundamentally failed and "floundered on the reefs of our diversity, and on the requirements of international geopolitics [and] assertions of narrow national self-interest on the part of our individual countries" (2008, p.41). In this respect, difference for differences sake, struggled to function as an organising principle for Hau'ofa's vision of a new Oceania. Indeed, as he notes in *OSoI* 'difference' and the vast linguistic and cultural diversity of the Melanesia, in particular Papua New Guinea/West Papua, has often in fact, been leveraged against Pacific communities to justify their colonial oppression. Where colonial powers conceptualised Melanesia as "the most fragmented world of all: tiny communities isolated by terrain and at

least one thousand languages" (2008, p.33). In this, we see how difference, particularly without a broader framework which explores and links it, reinforces the belittling visions of the Pacific, which see us as too diverse, too small, and too divided to have any real power and say in how our world is constructed.

In critiquing these attempts to navigate the differences of the Pacific however, Hau'ofa does not mean to diminish and undermine the differences of the Pacific through a monolithic account of what it means to be Pacific or Oceanian in a collective sense, "I am not in any way suggesting cultural homogeneity for our region. Such a thing is neither possible nor desirable… our diversity is necessary for the struggle against the homogenising forces of the global juggernaut" (2008, p.42). That is, to do so would be to fundamentally recommit the same enforcement of cultural homogeneity enforced by capital that he criticises in his account of the South Pacific Society. Instead, Hau'ofa proposes to navigate the multiplicity of the Pacific through the establishing of a new form of collective identity, that of a new Oceania. I think what is fundamentally at stake in Hau'ofa's call for a new Oceania then, is the gesture towards the possibility of an Oceania in which the differences, the multiple intersections which constitute our collective, can be navigated. A new Oceania, anchored in a new form of collective relationality, which unites us through our differences. This call to try and navigate our differences and multiplicities collectively being precisely what unites the texts which constitute his 'Project New Oceania.'

In '*TOiU*' Hau'ofa builds on the proposal in '*OSoI*' for a new form of relationality by gesturing towards a complimentary framework for how we might begin to move towards this new form of collective relationality, how we might be able to navigate these differences. Through '*TOiU*' Hau'ofa's explores the possibility of a new collective relationality anchored explicitly in our relationship to the ocean, articulating "the kind of consciousness that would help free us from the prevailing, externally generated definitions of our past, present, and future" (2008, p.41). Hau'ofa thus looks to the Pacific Ocean, "our common inheritance" (2008, p.42) as a paradigm, metaphor, and philosophy, through which the diversity and differences which constitute Oceania can be properly navigated in the pursuit of a collective regional identity. For Hau'ofa, this question of how to name, define, and unite Oceania in a way which navigated these differences, took on a renewed significance in the aftermath of the 1994 Pacific Week celebrations at the University of the South Pacific. During the week of celebrations, two incidents of fighting and violence broke out between different Pacific

communities. Hau'ofa suggests that these incidents demonstrated explicitly the issues with the forms of collective identities which the university emphasised, such as that of the 'Pacific Way' which celebrated difference purely for difference's sake. In response, the University of the South Pacific promoted "interest-based associations with memberships that cut across nationality and ethnicity" (2008, p.51). Turning to Hau'ofa himself to facilitate the establishing of an arts and cultural centre and programme.

This opportunity presented Hau'ofa with the opportunity to try and reconfigure the question of collective relationality via the aesthetic realm. It gestured to the possibility of a space in which the prospect of a new Oceania could be taken seriously, in which the multiple differences which constitute Oceanic realities could be explored, but also linked, connected, and framed in relation to a collective regional identity. It gestured towards the possibility of unity through difference. In this, Hau'ofa turned to the ocean, to water, as the core theme, the core unifying factor, through which the arts and cultural centre came to orient itself. Thus, he notes that "[a]ll our cultures have been shaped in fundamental ways by the adaptive interactions between our people and the sea that surrounds our island communities" (Hau'ofa, p.52). Further, that we who inhabit the Pacific "are among the minute proportion of the Earth's total human population who can truly be referred to as 'Oceanic peoples'" (Ibid.). It was this form of thinking and relationality which came to inform one of Hau'ofa's greatest achievements, namely, the formation of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture.

How then, does a reconfigured relationship to the ocean facilitate the navigation of difference, both in the University of the South Pacific as a microcosm of collective Oceanic relationalities, but also for Oceania in general? For Hau'ofa, the key comes in the identification of a shared strand or thread which exceeds the limits of pure difference, a strand which can facilitate the binding and navigation of collective Oceanic relationality, beyond a simple account of our shared and similar cultural markers. In this, while "our historical and cultural traditions are important elements of a regional identity, they are not in themselves sufficient to sustain that identity for they exclude all those people whose ancestral heritage is sourced elsewhere and those who are growing up in nontraditional environments" (2008, pp. 53-54). For the Oceanic region, particularly in modernity, it is precisely the ocean which operates as the common unifying factor, the medium which we are, by the very nature of being in Oceania, already fundamentally influenced by and in relation to. "The ocean that surrounds us is the one physical entity that all of us in Oceania share. It is the inescapable fact

of our lives" (2008, p.54). Having established a key metaphor and structure through which shared Oceanic relationality might be established, Hau'ofa also looks to the metaphysical legacies of modernity in shaping Oceanic relations to time and space, and what a different way of conceptualising them might mean.

In the previous section, Venus, this thesis presented an analysis and account of aqua nullius. There, I sought to articulate the colonial-capitalist paradigm of water relationality, both fresh and salt, exploring the structural logics against which Hau'ofa's account of collective ocean relationality stands. Through *TOiU* Hau'ofa gestures towards historically extant relationships to the ocean that demonstrate the significance and role it has played in Oceania's understanding of itself. These historical relationships to the ocean and its abject reality, in which it cares little for the lines we have drawn across its surface, in which it is, by its very nature and in its most literal sense, the common factor which unites our different communities, establishes the material basis for how Oceania can begin to collectivise its identity. In this, turning to the ocean, deriving identity from this oceanic relationship "is really an aspect of our waking up to things that are already happening around us" (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.55). This identity, however, of course faces a number of challenges. Central to this is the structural grounding of this world in global capitalism and the logics of modernity which reinforce the divisions and differences of the Pacific, weakening our sense of self. In particular, legal, and political disputes around the ownership of and right for individual nation-states throughout the Pacific to use the oceans, to use water, "may become a major divisive factor in the relationships between our countries in the future." (2008, p.55) Against this, Hau'ofa's notion of a new Oceania recognises "that the ocean is uncontainable and pays no respect to territoriality… that the sea must remain open to all of us." (2008, p.55) Ultimately, for Hau'ofa, finding commonality in our relationship to water "must tie history and culture to empirical reality and practical action." (2008, p.56) The navigating of our difference through common relation to water then, is one way in which Hau'ofa approaches the tensions of cultural difference and collective identities. Such that "as it is, our histories are essentially narratives told in the footnotes of the histories of empires" (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.62).

In *PtR*, Hau'ofa explores another key site of difference and its tensions, namely the difference between modernity's conceptualisation of space and time, and the possibility of an Oceanic understanding of space and time. In particular, Hau'ofa (2008, p.62) critiques

'Pacific histories' which he notes tend to examine our histories only in relation to "events determined by Euro-American imperialism… structured on the temporal division of the past into precontact, early contact, colonial, and postcolonial or neo-colonial periods." What this centring does then, is relegate Indigenous precolonial histories to the realm of myth and legend, to the seemingly unknowable. Leaning on the interventions of 'cultural constructionism' and the recognition of the importance of "constructing our pasts, our histories, from the vast storehouses of narratives, both written and oral, to push particular agendas", Hau'ofa (Ibid., p.61) suggests that key to moving towards a collective regional understanding of Oceania is a rethinking of the historical realities which undermine our notions of self. Thus, rather than accepting the traditionally accepted histories of the Pacific, which have a tendency to summarise hundreds and thousands of years in the first chapter of their accounts as 'prehistory,' we need to "delineat[e] a new temporal dimension of history by doing away with the division of the past in which most of it lies outside history." (Ibid., p.64) What this seemingly necessitates is a reconceptualising of Oceania's historic memories, recognising that there are histories outside the main narratives which draw on oral traditions and stories, histories "as old as our remembered pasts." (Ibid., p.64) Leaning on the work of 'Okusitino Māhina and his analyses of the ways in which oral traditions, particularly through story and song, reflected histories and geographies that were valid 'academic histories', Hau'ofa suggests that building these new histories might further be done through a recognition of the importance of these oral traditions grounded in their ecological environments, and their significance in holding our histories.

Having articulated the importance of reconceptualising Oceanic histories, Hau'ofa turns to examine some of the ways in which we can begin to do so, articulating three aspects of our accounts of events in Oceania which need to be rethought. First is the refocusing of whose lives and events in our recollections are centred, where figures like James Cook are side-lined in favour of histories which emphasise "how people, ordinary people, the forgotten people of history, have coped and are coping with their harsh realities, their resistance and struggles to be themselves and hold together." (Ibid., p.65) Here, we see again, an emphasis of diversity and difference in service of collectivity and unity in Hau'ofa's account of the people proper to Oceanic histories. The histories which he suggests need to be told are the ones that speak to the majority of Oceanians, that speak to our realities, ones that recognise our differences but also our shared experience. Beyond a refocusing of narrative standpoint,

Hau'ofa further calls us to consider the importance of an absolute rethinking of time and space, a shift towards understanding our histories that is opposed to modernity's mechanical and linear notions of time, notions of time derived from and measured against an infinite march of progress and development, forever relegating the past to some distant thing that was lesser than. This rethinking of time, however, is not some esoteric departure from reality, rather, it is a material rethinking of relation to time and space through a recognition of Indigenous Oceanic relations to place and past.

Hau'ofa (2008) demonstrates that there are different ways of relating to time across the Pacific through an analysis of Fijian, Tongan, and Hawaiian literary conventions when speaking of past, present, and future, asserting that generally, in their framings the past is often located, or associated with verb forms which point towards being in front of oneself. What this ultimately speaks to, he maintains, is a way of understanding time as fundamentally grounded in space, as the past being located within the physical environment around us, recorded in stories and histories, but embodied in the very world we encountered. Which he names ecological time. This framing which locates the past ahead of us "is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and be aware of its presence" (Ibid., p.67). This relationship to time is one which is non-linear, one which recognises the past, present, and future as constantly in flux influencing and shaping each other. However, it is also one which is cyclical, one which, in being tied to environment and ecology, is tied to the shifts, cycles, and patterns of our natural world. The relationship between history and environment is important for Hau'ofa as it presents a material example of the ways in which our so-called prehistories have been preserved. Drawing on the work of Futa Helu (1979;1980) whose translations of an ancient Tongan dance chant, the *me'etu'upaki*, demonstrated that it was about a voyage from Kiribati to Tonga, Hau'ofa suggests that these chants in fact contain ancient sea routes, showing how environment and aesthetic traditions preserve knowledges through time and space. He highlights therefore, that Oceanian temporalities, knowledges and epistemologies are anchored in their worlds, in their environments and ecologies.

Ecological time is a necessary component in the reconceptualising of Oceanic histories as it ties our pasts to much longer narratives recorded in our environments and oral traditions rather than written texts, and opens up the possibility of remembering new histories, new pasts, recorded in these places. Through rekindling such relationships to space and oral tradition, recognising the past in front of us, Hau'ofa suggests we might begin to

redirect our histories, focusing on the average Oceanic life in our recollections, preserving our oral traditions and the deep knowledges they hold, and leaning into the cyclical ways in which time and environment are and have been in relation to our people. In this way we might begin to be able to move towards Oceanic notions of past, present, and future which allow us to break beyond the limitations of modernity's imagination, establishing our interconnected pasts and broadening our historical senses of self.

While *PtR* presents a means of reconceptualising Oceanic histories, there is, I think, an interesting absence or gap in Hau'ofa's accounts of remembered pasts, namely for those of Melanesian, or what he describes in this paper as 'West Oceania.' There are two points which are interesting here, in the first instance Hau'ofa's language evolves at this time to apply a type of geographical framing to the distinctions of Oceania. Here, I think, having recognised the problems of applying terms like Melanesia, Hau'ofa sought a way to differentiate the experiences being examined without falling into the type of racialisations and race science which established the distinctions between Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. In this respect, West Oceania speaks to the general experiences of Black Oceania, of the racialised difference which conditions their experiences and the erasure of our histories, but without the specifically race science embedded in the terminology. At the same time, indeed, in the first instance, he describes the genealogies of West Oceania as "relatively shallow," yet, does not return to the problems or possibilities that such a prospect might hold for collective reconceptualisations of time and space. With Black Oceania, certain suppositions about historical narratives and the prospect of beginning elsewhere in time, of leaning into ancient histories, can only go so far. Our oral traditions can only penetrate so deep into our pasts, and our landscapes have changed through the tens of thousands of years we have inhabited our islands. Yet, in his drive towards a new Oceania, the condition of Black Oceania serves more as a warning rather than a question. Hau'ofa notes for example, the case of the Wonnarua, Aboriginal peoples whose "lands are gone, and only a handful of the words of their original language are still in use. They have no oral narratives, no memory whatsoever of their past before the invasion and obliteration of their ancestral world." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.75) He contends that this type of loss, this loss of land, severs a people from their traditional livelihoods, but also, "from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and their ultimate claim for the legitimacy of their existence. It is the destruction of the age-old rhythms of cyclical dramas that lock together familiar time, motion, and space." (Ibid., p.75) However,

he struggles to provide a framework through which this tension might be reconciled in the temporal reconfigurations of Oceania, or at least interrogated. In instances of settler colonialism and occupation, which both Ondawame (2000) and Banivanua-Mar (2008) argue that the West Papuan context exemplifies, where these lands and their relationships are specifically targeted, where the goal is the eradication of and replacement of the Indigenous peoples, the questions of how Black Oceania might begin to reconceptualise its history and self, are imperative to our struggle towards a collective Oceania. It is in respect to these tensions that I raise the possibility of another dimension of difference which needs to be interrogated in the struggles towards a new Oceania, and whose exposition and navigation might help, in rethinking time and space across our great sea of islands.

For both the navigation of cultural differences, and the navigation of the spatio-temporal nuances of reconfigured Oceanic relationalities, Hau'ofa turns to the aesthetic, to the arts and cultural practices for their importance in developing these relationalities and traversing these realms, for their role in binding culture, history, and reality. He thus builds on Albert Wendt's account of the importance of Oceanic artists where he emphasises the importance of Oceanic artists in their capacity to not only reinforce our cultural differences, our individualities, but also, "acting as a unifying force in our region. In their individual journeys into the Void, these artists are, through their work, are explaining us to ourselves and creating a new Oceania." (Wendt, 1976, p.60) Hau'ofa's Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture thus comes to facilitate the development of a new Oceania, navigating the difference and multiplicity of Oceania through "begin[ning] with what we have in common and draw[ing] inspiration from the successes and failures in our adaptation to the influences of the sea." (Hau'ofa, 2008, p.57) The question which is central to this analysis of Hau'ofa is in what ways can his navigation of these other types of difference, help in the navigation of the onto-epistemic realities of Black life in Oceania.

The Case for a Black Oceania

Here I would like to stretch Hau'ofa's analysis somewhat, by articulating a point of difference imposed on Oceania which I maintain must also be navigated in the search for a new Oceania. In this, I could perhaps be accused of beginning with difference rather than commonality, however, this is done not to detract from Hau'ofa's assertion of the importance of beginning with commonality, but rather, to examine and navigate a particular relationship to difference which has and continues to function to fundamentally undermine the possibility

of unity, of collectivity across Oceania. In this, I draw on Audre Lorde's analysis of our relationships to intersectional differences, wherein she rallies precisely against the relationships to Black difference which have left Black life resistant to difference as "difference had been used so cruelly against us as a people that as a people we were reluctant to tolerate any diversion from what was externally defined as Blackness." (Lorde, 1984, p.136) Difference is challenged instead of recognised and explored, axiologically determining its reality as problematic. While Hau'ofa positions his account of a new Oceania and our relationship to the ocean as a means for collectivising an Oceanic regional identity, as I have demonstrated, he is explicitly clear that this cannot come at the expense of particular cultural differences. Difference and its identification, particularly in relation to Blackness, cannot be rendered invisible solely for the purposes of some notion of false unity, especially in the Pacific. Thus, building on Hau'ofa's call to a new Oceania, this sense of collectivity, is one which must confront its differences, not hide from them because it is convenient. It cannot pretend they do not exist because it is easier, or because it is useful. In this respect, I propose to complicate Hau'ofa's account of difference through an interrogation of the onto-epistemic conditions which shape Black Oceanic existence across the Pacific Ocean today. In particular, I focus on the West Papuan struggle for liberation and fight against genocide at the hands of Indonesia, and the silence of the world as it unfolds, as a paradigmatic example of the degree to which Black life in Oceania is disregarded and dehumanised, examining the processes which have enforced and legitimate this violence.

To stretch Hau'ofa and make sense of this situation then, I draw on the radical Black tradition to explore the particularities of the Black Oceanic experience, and the onto-epistemic realities of Black existence in a white supremacist world. This is not done, however, through a simple suturing or transposing of broader radical Black traditions onto the West Papuan and Oceanic contexts. Indeed, as Lorde reminds us, "unity does not mean unanimity - Black people are not some standardly digestible quantity. In order to work together we do not have to become a mix of indistinguishable particles." The shared conditions of Black existence, highlighting its individual iterations and their consequences, does not detract from the struggle for Black liberation but strengthens it (Lorde, 1984, p. 136). Rather, I build on Quito Swan's (2022) examination of the historical and contemporary ties between Black liberation movements across Oceania and the Pan-African/Afro-American

struggles, interrogating the onto-epistemic consequences of white supremacy in relation to Black Oceanic Indigeneity.

The material reality of these relationships have been demonstrated in significant depth in Swan's *Blinded by Bandung* (2018) and *Pasifika Black: Oceania, Anti-Colonialism and the African World* (2022) which present accounts of the roles in which anti-Black violence, Black solidarity, and Black internationalism have influenced the Pacific. In these texts, Swan demonstrates the material reality of these shared histories, the recognition by Black resistance fighters across Oceania of the intertwined and international nature of shared Black struggles for liberation, across a number of different scenes. Building on Swan's analyses, this chapter explores three of these scenes, namely the Bandung Conference, the Papua New Guinea Black Power Movement, and Walter Lini's Melanesian Socialism, to examine more explicitly the onto-epistemic relationships demonstrated in these struggles, drawing out the consequences of ontological death in Oceania, and gesturing towards the specifically Oceanic responses to this question which will be explored in the following chapter.

In *Blinded by Bandung*, Swan (2018) examines how the 1955 Bandung (Afro-Asian) Conference demonstrated both the realities of shared struggle between Black Oceania and the broader Black struggle, but also, reinforced Indonesian occupation of a Black nation. He notes that Indonesia utilised their position as hosts of the conference to strengthen their claim to West Papua, weaponising their role and anti-colonial struggles to suppress the West Papuan struggle for freedom. Importantly however, Swan also highlights how these relationships have shifted and evolved exploring the solidarity between Pan-African liberation movements and the West Papuan/Black Oceanic struggle for liberation. Thus, at Wole Soyinka's 1976 'Seminar for African World Alternatives' for example, a range of Black intellectuals from around the world, including Trinidad's CLR James, signed a '*Declaration of Black Intellectuals*' "which called for the sovereignty of West Papua and East Timor from Indonesian imperialism." (Swan, 2018, p.59) Through '*Pasifika Black*' Swan (2022) provides an explicit account of the ways in which Black existence across the Pacific in general, has approached, integrated, and adapted the legacies and lessons from Black liberation struggles around the world to make sense of its conditions. Drawing on a range of contexts, Swan (2022) articulates the fundamentally interconnected nature of these struggles and broader Black struggles around the world. In these struggles, those who came before us recognised their struggle was united through their opposition to the same logics of colonial-

capitalism, the same denial and policing of Black beings and drew on each other's legacies and lessons to build solidarity and strive for Black liberation (Swan, 2022).

In the context of Papua New Guinea for example, student activists drew parallels in their struggles to the Black Power movements in the U.S. Where students at the University of Papua New Guinea through the 1970s and 1980s formed organisations such as the 'Niugini Black Power Group' (NBPG) which sought to both stand against the oppressions of Black life across the Pacific - engaging in actions for West Papua and East Timor. Further they sought to embody aspects of the philosophy and practice of the Négritude movements - hosting and facilitating a range of Black conferences and festivals (Swan, 2022). Through these moments and celebrations, these instances of what I would name 'Black Oceania' coming together with shared realities, struggles, and experiences of Blackness through colonialism fostered the development of movements and concepts such as the 'Melanesian Way' and the search for a means of collectivising and uniting these struggles. This was of critical importance particularly in the context of Papua New Guinean independence in 1975 where the prospect of moving together as an independent collective nation-state seemingly necessitated the establishing of a socio-cultural framework which would unify the general population in the interests of the nation.

Narokobi's (1983) articulation of the 'Melanesian Way' for example, endeavoured to provide an ideology or philosophy through which he hoped to unite the peoples of Papua New Guinea. In this, 'The Melanesian Way' sought to explore and affirm Melanesia as Melanesia, it sought to set forward a positive articulation of how Melanesia, and in particular Papua New Guinea, can begin to move together through an affirmation of Melanesian values and beliefs, - its relationalities, over and above those of modernity. The assertion of the Melanesian Way represents a type of regional identity engaged with fundamental issues relating to the nation-states of Black Oceania and the movement towards a new Oceania. Its primary concern is navigating the tensions of difference and unity, Blackness, and anti-Blackness generally on the level of a geographical and racialised arrangement of nation-states, examining their possible functions in facilitating or inhibiting the maintenance and upholding of the modern Papua New Guinean nation-state. Building on this, through the concept of Black Oceania this thesis interrogates these questions on a collective regional scale. For the Melanesian Way the assertion and affirmation of unified Black/Melanesian traditions and customs, established the basis, the metaphor through which the differences

between villages and communities can be navigated in a way which ensures that Melanesia still moves together. Where the Melanesian Way as a framework primarily concerns itself with the operations and possibilities of a singular nation-state, articulating how a Melanesian nation could and might come together.

Through Black Oceania I aim to reopen the question of Black existence, of Melanesia, to the rest of the Pacific and to Oceania through an account of the continued genocide against the peoples of West Papua. The Melanesian Way asserts the possibility of a way forward for Melanesian nation-states, the possibility of imagined futures anchored in past ways of being, of a strong and cohesive Melanesia standing together. Building on this, I raise the issue of Black Oceania precisely to shift the parameters of these questions to a collective regional scale, examining the barriers to achieving a collective Oceania through the underlying structures of white supremacy and colonial-capitalism. This is in part grounded in the struggle for Melanesian organisations, such as the Melanesian Spear Headgroup navigate and overcome the influences of core nations, continuing to defer West Papuan recognition (Anthony, 2023). One of Swan's key insights, while demonstrating the similarities and shared nature of Black liberation struggles in and out of the Pacific, was that in their use of and appeal to Black theory from outside of Oceania, the activists before us of these eras always shaped and interpreted them in their own ways. That there are contextual influences in how theory is examined, applied, and navigated. I examine how Oceanic Indigeneity drawing on the lessons of these traditions, offer our own ways of navigating the prospect of ontological death. As such, while I highlight a specific site of difference in Oceania which necessitates an analysis and confrontation, at the same time I hold to Hau'ofa's belief that there is something particular to Oceania's relationship to water and environment which facilitates the navigation of these confrontations, and provides us with the dream of a world which can transcend the onto-epistemic violences of white supremacy and colonial-capitalism.

This is done with a particular focus on the ontological condition of Black life in Oceania and particularly West Papua by providing an account of the West Papuan struggle that identifies the continued roles of capitalism and white supremacy which function to condition Black Oceanian existence. In this, while I focus on West Papua as a particular form of Black experience, this is not done to exclude other forms of racialisation and violence against Black Oceania. This notion of Black Oceania speaks specifically to the persistence of Black racialised life across the Pacific. Thus, rather than replicating the racist separation of

Oceania into the three categories of Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian, which blends explicitly racist divisions with geographical violence, Black Oceania gestures to the reality that across all the islands of the Pacific there persists forms of Blackness which have developed out of both the imposition of this race science (Arvin, 2019). Further, this is informed by the reality that prior to colonisation and the violences of Europe, supposedly distinct racial and geographical groups were non-homogenous, wherein Black, and non-Black Oceanians were migrating and travelling across our ocean for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European colonisers and their need to distinctly divide us (Hau'ofa, 2008). It was through the early colonial period with its imposition of racialised divisions as white pseudoscientists attempted to categorise the Pacific in relation to their logics, and through the modern formation of nation-states during the neocolonial period, that these relationships were ultimately severed (Arvin, 2019).

Unfortunately, in many ways these white supremacist beliefs have been incorporated and assimilated into the Pacific. With the Pacific still leaning into racial divisions of colonial-capitalism. Where white supremacist recognition of proximity to whiteness means that they are less subjected to the anti-Black violence of colonial-capitalism. The colonial answers to the 'Polynesian Problem' provided opportunities for the non-Black Pacific peoples to leverage their cultural values and lighter skin colour to place themselves further along the racialised hierarchies of white supremacy (Arvin, 2019). In this, Blackness within non-Black Pacific communities has often come to be associated negatively, with dehumanising connotations of primitivity and barbarism being emphasised to differentiate Polynesian communities from their Black relatives. The question of the Black condition in the Pacific has motivated a number of discussions the use and claiming of Black identities in the Pacific, and particularly in Aotearoa. This often being in relation to the sometimes use of the N-word in Māori and Pacific music, the adoption of Black aesthetics, including the use of Ebonics and 'African American vernacular English' (AAVE) and whether or not it is cultural appropriation or reflections of a shared struggle (Hayden, 2018; Mire, Wakefield, & Q, 2022). It reflects however, the underlying role of the assimilation of white supremacist narratives in the Pacific through colonisation and the tendrils of this world-system. In the term '*meauli*' this logic persists as well, reducing Black being to a 'thing.' (Folau, 2021). What is apparent in the settler-colonial imposition of anti-Blackness across Oceania is that it functions as precisely another moment in which difference is wielded to continue the

oppression of Oceania. Ascribing differing onto-epistemic valuations to our being and dividing us from ourselves.

In this respect, I want to be clear that my differentiation between Black and non-Black Oceania is grounded in the recognition that this difference is determined precisely in reaction to the specific differences in the onto-epistemic structures which are shaping the Pacific today. Asserting the reality of Black Oceania is done precisely to help identify the colonial-capitalist structures which condition our existences today. As such, 'Black Oceania' as a means of collectivising Black experience across Oceania is articulated with the hope that this difference and its assigned meanings, can be overcome through a new Oceania. A new Oceania I argue is conditional on the overcoming of the onto-epistemic valuation and interpretation of this racialised difference. In this, under colonial-capitalism the differences in our skin colours and cultures function as semiotic signifiers demarcating a difference. Where Blackness and non-Blackness determine whether one is human or object, assigning it a particular value, and relating to it as such (Fanon, 2008). This relation produces the situation in which the hegemonic interpretation of difference is across a schema of value, what Stein et al. (2017) define as separability. Lorde critiques this schema of separability or interpretation of difference as one which produces a situation where "any difference between us means one of us must be inferior… [and] the recognition of any difference must be fraught with guilt." (1984, p. 118) In calling for a recognition of the ontological reality of Black Oceanic existence, this thesis proposes that the overcoming of this reality through reconfiguring Oceania's relationship to our differences and to the ocean, holds within it one of the necessary conditions for moving towards Hau'ofa's prospect of a new Oceania.

In the chapter one Anchoring Ceremonies, I presented an account of the more radical kernels embedded in the notion of, and call to, a new Oceania - examining the conditions in which Hau'ofa was writing and what is at stake in his work. To navigate the differences which currently inform and structure our current relationship to racialised difference then, I move to present an explicit account of the ontological conditions which shape the Black nature of the Black Oceanic experience. I introduced an account of the economic and racialised systems which have produced the West Papuan context in particular, before engaging in a broader analysis of the ontological consequences and implications of the West Papuan condition In this, I first present an account of the economic and racialised systems which have produced the West Papuan context in particular, before engaging in a broader

analysis of the ontological consequences and implications of the West Papuan condition. Drawing on Fanon (1963) who reminds us that the economic and racial structures function as one, I aim to show how the particular functions of capitalist exploitation in the Black Oceanic context structures its dehumanisation. By drawing out the legacies of early colonialism and the operations of the Dutch East India Company, I demonstrate how the operations of colonial-capitalism functioned together to incorporate Black Oceanic existence into a schema of racial signifiers. One which interprets Blackness as the negation of being.

In this respect, we must be clear that it is the logics of colonial-capitalism which have produced the situation in which Black Oceania is interpreted by as the negation of being by modernity's police operations. Where the Dutch seizure of historical trade routes and the imposition of European slave forms justified their violence through the negating the semiotic signifier of Black Oceanic skin led to the situation in which being was rendered unhuman in the social consciousness of colonial power, reifying and rendering them as disposable commodities, objects, in the European conscience. This internal European shift is central to the global permittance of the genocide against West Papua and resulted from the specific interaction between European notions of civilization, race, and the economic needs of capitalism, which produced the racialised body of the 'Melanesian.' Race theorists such as Charles de Brosses for example, attempted to locate this notion of a Black Melanesian people within a system of colonial hierarchies erasing their humanity in the descriptions and analysis they provided (Arvin, 2019).

Swan further highlights how Melanesia's representation in the social imaginary of the white consciousness, and in particular the American consciousness, was overarchingly characterised through a few key incidents. He examines how in 1893 for example, Chicago's World Fair spoke of the coming inclusion of "South Sea savages", "tattooed cannibals" at the fair, describing them as "the lowest specimens of humans on earth." (Swan, 2022, p.25), identifying this as one of the earliest moments in which Melanesian/Black Oceanians were interpreted by the colonial world. The imagery of Melanesia as a place of savagery, barbarism, and lawlessness was seemingly further cemented in the white consciousness was further reified through media such as *Life*'s (1962) article "*Survivors from the Stone Age: A Savage People that Love War*", and the disappearance of Michael Rockefeller constructing in the social imaginary a notion of Melanesia as violent. Through movements such as these and many more, Black life across Oceania was further established in the white consciousness as

fundamentally as the opposite of their world. This process of dehumanisation is fundamentally necessary to the functioning of capitalism insofar as the hierarchy it produces allows capital to exploit those rendered less than human and their resources (Williams, 1994). Within the context of West Papua, this was first demonstrated in the Dutch exploitation of the Papuan slave trade where the West Papuans themselves were the commodities being traded. When the Dutch later solidified their position in West Papua they began to exploit the West Papuan natural resources as well, reconfiguring the process of dehumanisation. They removed Indigenous communities from their traditional lands in the interests of mining and logging and began to integrate West Papua into the global economy, generating significant amounts of wealth for the Dutch (Anderson, 2015). Ultimately, as Indonesian took control of West Papua, their nation-state commitment to the needs of global capitalism, their positioning themselves as a semi-periphery nation within global capitalism, reinforced this process of dehumanisation and racialisation, whereby to protect the wealth being generated by West Papua they violently oppress West Papua.

Europe

As discussed in the section on Venus, the early 16th Century was characterised by wealthy European powers engaging in a programme of imperial expansion under the guise of 'discovery.' Wielding the authority of the Christian God and considerable military force (the twin indices of supposed "civilisation": religion and technology), a number of Christian European states began to divvy up the 'unknown' world between themselves. They sent explorers, naval officers, soldiers, and their ships around the globe to discover and claim as much territory as possible for God and country before other Christian states could. These territories they considered their divine right under the Doctrine of Discovery (Ngata, 2019). This right would also result in the influx of vast amounts of wealth as they pillaged and exhausted the lands, waters, and peoples of their new colonies. For Europe, the turn of the 15th Century had brought new maritime trade routes as the first European navigator; Vasco da Gama, circumnavigated Africa to reach India by sea. The establishment of maritime trade routes between Europe, India, and Southeast Asia would bring immense wealth to Europe, particularly through control of the spice trade as they murdered and fought their way across the oceans. The demand for spices, and the increased drive for wealth fostered by the early development of capitalism, would lead to greater expansion east into Southeast Asia by these competing European forces. In 1526, the Portuguese navigator Jorge de Menzes was to be the

Governor of one of these new territories in Southeast Asia, the Maluku islands (Webb-Gannon, 2021). However, sailing southeast past Maluku to Biak Island he was forced to winter on Biak Island. When he could sail again, he headed south to the mainland and then west to Maluku and is thus credited as the first European to encounter the islands which he named Papua. The name 'New Guinea' would be added in 1545 by the Spanish officer Yñigo Ortiz de Retez, who gave this name to the main island. Thus, the islands of Papua and New Guinea were officially 'discovered' by Europe, however, neither Portugal nor Spain would have any success establishing themselves and would lose their window as a new European power rose to prominence in the region.

The Dutch East India Company

Instead, the 16th Century found the newly formed Dutch Empire expanding their power and influence in the region significantly. Though they were a small nation, the Dutch had allied with the English against the Spanish and controlled a near global network of oceanic trade routes. In 1600 a Dutch merchant ship returned from Indonesia with spices and made nearly 400% profit for its backers (Milton, 1999). In response to pressure by merchants, the Dutch Government helped establish the Dutch East India Company in 1602 and granted them a monopoly on trade throughout Southeast Asia. The Dutch East India Company exemplified the newly established 'joint-stock venture', a type of company developed by European states which socialised the risks involved in colonisation and conquest by requiring the equity provided to fund these endeavours was collectively sourced through private individuals (Campling and Colás, 2021). In taking on the task of colonisation, these companies were afforded significant powers, including the authority to build garrisons, fortifications and trade outposts, wage war and/or pursue peace through treaties, even to imprison those illegally trading in their territories (Baars, 2015).

The Dutch established themselves as the dominant European power in Southeast Asia from Java to the Maluku Islands, kicking out and policing all other European influence. The Dutch however sought more and began the process of colonising West Papua. They utilised a number of tactics to achieve this. In 1660 for example, the Dutch East India Company asserted via treaty that Sultan Saifuddin of Tidore in the Maluku islands was the legitimate ruler of 'New Guinea.' The 'New Guinea' territory however was undefined and would remain undefined with neither the Sultan nor the Dutch being aware of the extent and size of

the territories they were supposedly in control of (Andaya, 1993). The Sultan's claim to West Papua in 1660 was thus tenuous at best, but, in strategically allying himself with the Dutch he positioned himself as the sole means through which Papuan slaves and goods made it into the European and Asian markets. The Sultanate thus acted as proxy rulers for the Dutch East India Company, securing and increasing Dutch trade supremacy in the region. The Dutch themselves would not even attempt to venture deeper than the coastal areas of West Papua until the early 19th Century (Webb-Gannon, 2021).

At this point, the main economic incentive underlying the Dutch presence in West Papua was the supply of slave labour (Webb-Gannon, 2021). Where Papuan slaves were either sold onto the broader Asian markets or used as labour across Indonesia in the spice plantations. In 1828, following increased pressure from other colonial powers who sought to claim the islands of New Guinea for themselves, the Dutch sought to affirm their control more explicitly over West Papua. To secure their position, the Dutch, through their Indonesian proxies, gifted the West Papuan territory back to themselves. The Dutch flag was hoisted in Triton Bay claiming the southern coast west of the 141st meridian for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Mörzer Bruyns, 2019). The Dutch added the north coast, west of Humboldt Bay, in 1848, essentially finalising the territory today known as West Papua. As they formalised their territories, the Dutch also began exploring for resources and began to mine the lands and would maintain control over West Papua and Southeast Asia throughout the 19th and early 20th Century, contributing significantly to their wealth as a nation as they expropriated Papuan resources and slave-labour.

Dutch control over West Papua, however, was fundamentally relinquished in the aftermath of World War Two. The significance of the Pacific theatre of the war saw Japan invade and occupy West Papua, removing the Dutch. As the tides of war turned however, the U.S. and Allied forces reclaimed the territory. At this point the United Nations determined that the Dutch would retain control over West Papua. However, as the war ended, renewed calls for Indonesian independence erupted throughout Southeast Asia as they sought to overthrow colonial rule. The Dutch faced resistance from independence forces and mounting international condemnation of their responses. Fearing potential internal conflict after an already costly war, they agreed to recognise Indonesian independence in 1949. This agreement however left the status of West Papua uncertain, with Indonesia attempting to claim it as part of their newly established independent state. The Dutch argued instead that

the West Papuans had no ethnic ties to the Indonesians and so should be independent (Ondawame, 2000). A compromise was eventually realised in which Indonesia and the Dutch would sign the treaty and commit to negotiate West Papua's status over the course of the following year.

Indonesian Rule and the West Papuan Genocide

Ultimately, the Dutch refused to cede West Papua to Indonesia and instead began pushing for the development of an independent West Papuan state. Having failed to sway the Dutch parliament, Indonesia then embarked on a series of attempts to motivate the United Nations to intervene in the dispute on their behalf. Indonesia however failed to reach the necessary support for their claim, and by 1958 it embarked on a new path to claim West Papua (Webb-Gannon, 2021). This consisted of attacking and harassing Dutch trade interests throughout Indonesia and West Papua and resulted in a full withdrawal in Dutch trade from the area. The Dutch seemed at this point increasingly committed to an independent West Papuan state. In 1959 they began actively encouraging the development of a flag and national anthem, much to the ire of the Indonesians (Webb-Gannon, 2021). This culminated in elections for the development of a New Guinea council in January in 1961 and later that year the raising of the Morning Star flag on the first of December. By January of the following year, the Indonesians began launching direct paratrooper attacks on West Papua (Webb-Gannon, 2021).

Crucial to the Indonesian offense was the support they had enlisted from the Soviet Union, which meant they represented a significant threat to capitalist political stability in the area. Facing open conflict with a newly militarised Indonesia fitted with Soviet bombers, fighter jets, submarines, cruisers, and much more, the indebted Dutch began to lose their appetite for West Papuan independence (Wies, 2001). This, coupled with pressure from the U.S., resulted in the Dutch signing the New York Agreement in August 1962 (Webb-Gannon, 2021). The agreement would place West Papua under United Nations, and then Indonesian control, on the condition that all West Papuan adults would be able to participate in the proposed 1969 'Act of Free Choice.'

The 'Act of Free Choice,' or 'Act of No Choice' was to give the West Papuans the opportunity to vote and decide if they wanted to remain as part of the Indonesian state. By 1969 though, as identified by numerous diplomatic cables, the rest of the world, and in

particular the U.S., were aware of the suppression and violence by Indonesia against the West Papuans, and the illegitimacy of their actions leading up to and after the vote. When it came time for the proposed vote, the Indonesian military selected 1,025 West Papuans and forced them at gunpoint and under threat of the destruction of their villages to vote in favour of remaining a part of Indonesia (Webb-Gannon, 2021). The United Nations accepted the vote, providing no comment on its legitimacy, declaring it unanimous. This was despite the recognition by the U.S. embassy in July 1969 that "The Act of Free Choice (AFC) in West Irian [West Papua] is unfolding like a Greek tragedy, the conclusion preordained. The main protagonist, the GOI [Government of Indonesia], cannot and will not permit any resolution other than the continued inclusion of West Irian in Indonesia. Dissident activity is likely to increase but the Indonesian armed forces will be able to contain and, if necessary, suppress it." (Simpson, 2004). The U.N. accepted the results and in doing so granted the power of the nation-state, its extra-legal capacity to engage in violence, its right to oppress, kill, and dehumanise West Papuans within the contemporary international context. In doing so, it denies the right to self-determination, rejecting the suggestion that they might be a sovereign people, and thus possibility of challenging Indonesian control through international courts, or as a separate Indigenous peoples.

What has followed is the ongoing genocide of the Indigenous West Papuans by Indonesian forces. Indonesian occupation has led to approximately 500,000 Papuans being executed by Indonesian soldiers, with thousands more displaced as their villages are burnt down (Ondawame, 2000). In the aftermath of the Act of Free Choice, the false vote, a number of independence movements were formed, including the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) and West Papua National Liberation Army (TNPB) (Ondawame, 2000). At the centre of these liberation movements is the assertion that the 1961 raising of the Morning Star flag signalled West Papua's independence. Since 1971 these groups have formally operated under the Morning Star flag in their struggle against the colonial Indonesian forces. In response, Indonesia has made the raising of the Morning Star above or without the Indonesian flag illegal, punishable by imprisonment for up to ten years (Webb-Gannon, 2021). Alongside the lethal repression of protesting students, mass executions in response to attacks on mining operations, and the destruction of their traditional territories and villages, West Papuans are also subject to racism and bigotry on a

daily basis from the growing Indonesian populace. (*RNZ*, 2021; Davidson 2019; Doherty, 2019)

Capitalism and Dehumanisation

Within the context of international law, the abuses which are allowed to occur in West Papua demonstrate the reality of the dehumanisation of the West Papuans. If they were regarded as having human rights, then the atrocities they are subjected to would incur some international response, some outcry, yet the United Nations does nothing. It is clear there is a police operation which denies West Papua the capacity to stage a disagreement. The actions of Indonesia violate both the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 2007 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations General Assembly, 1948, 2007). Indonesia also makes it clear that they are not concerned with the human rights abuses they commit, with numerous massacres having occurred at their hands (Ondawame, 2000; Webb-Gannon, 2021). Further, in recognising that the West Papuan's call for independence demonstrated their assertion of Indigenous difference, recognising that West Papuans are their own Indigenous peoples, then Indonesia's actions in West Papua violate the 2007 Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which enshrine the rights to indigenous self-determination and exercise of self-government, freedom and security. (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) Yet, in spite of the growing list of human rights concerns in West Papua expressed even by the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet (2019), there is little being done to stop the human rights abuses being committed by Indonesia. It becomes clear then that the humanity of the West Papuans is fundamentally disregarded in the interests of capital.

This process of dehumanisation has facilitated the economic development of global capitalism all across the world. As Williams (1994, p.52) notes, the development and expansion of capitalism was critically financed by the slave trade, whereby "the profits obtained [from the slave trade] provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution." This relationship, at the heart and foundation of capitalist development, has come to characterise the world today. As, Wilderson (2021) reminds us, ""slavery is a relational dynamic - not an event and certainly not a place in space… just as colonialism is a relational dynamic - and that relational

dynamic can continue to exist once the settler has left or ceded governmental power." (Wilderson, 2020 p.41) This relation still functions today, wherein the West Papuan existence, its Black life, is disregarded in the interests of capital and its drive for endless wealth accumulation. The discoveries of gold, copper, and other precious metals, as well as the presence of oil, hard-woods, and extensive fisheries across West Papua throughout the 20th Century have meant that the global interests of capital continue to far outweigh any push to investigate the human rights abuses committed by Indonesia. The Grasberg or Freeport Mine operating out of West Papua for example, is the second largest copper mine, and one of the largest gold mines in the world (Mining Technology, 2020). If the global North were to support West Papuan independence they would jeopardise international supplies of gold, copper, and wood, the vast amounts of wealth being extracted from the lands and seas. Recognising this, Indonesia has thus been unrelenting in their claim to West Papua and in the genocide they commit against the West Papuans. This is done precisely because of the need to secure their economic interests and has characterised Indonesian interactions with the West Papuans since their early independence from the Dutch. The Dutch had agreed to Indonesian independence on the condition that Indonesia would take on the debt the Dutch owed for the territories, totalling 1.3 billion guilders (Kahin, 1995). This placed immense pressure on the newly established independent Indonesian economy, pressure which Indonesia sought to offset through the continued exploitation of West Papua's mines and resources.

The intertwining logics of modernity produce a situation in West Papua in which the economic imperatives of continual growth and exploitation necessitates the ongoing genocide of Black life in West Papua. The wealth generated by the Indonesian exploitation of the West Papuan environment fuels global trade and production. It is not just Indonesia which grows wealthy from their occupation of West Papua, the Dutch economy recovered after the Second World War in part because of the debt they collected from Indonesia. The occupation of West Papua is a global affair with international corporations profiting of the genocide. The U.S. based Freeport McMoRan company for example owned 90% of the Grasberg mine until 2018, extracting vast amounts of wealth through the mining and selling of West Papuan gold and copper. In this respect, we must be clear about the role that global capitalism plays in the maintaining the genocide in West Papua. The underlying processes of dehumanisation and racialisation have facilitated the continued exploitation of West Papua and are maintained fundamentally by global capitalism which forces national economies to compete against each

other in the pursuit of profit. Understanding the role of capitalism in maintaining the genocide in West Papua is key to examining the actions of national leaders and supposed allies who engage in lateral violence when advocating for anything less than a free West Papua. In the first instance then, colonisation developed new markets and resources to exploit outside of Europe for the flourishing of capitalism. As Lenin (1963, p.67) reminds us, "Imperialism is capitalism at the stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established… in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed." This exploitation became intertwined with the racist traditions of the Enlightenment to fundamentally justify and legitimate the oppression of the peoples who lived in these territories. In doing so the West Papuans were fundamentally rendered as sub-human, allowing for the prioritisation of Dutch and European capitalist interests. As the Dutch lost control over West Papua to Indonesia, the pervasive nature of global capitalism ensured its basic logics, including its relation to Blackness, persisted unfettered in the West Papuan context by forcing the Indonesians into a debt relation from the outset. It was thus necessary to the establishment of the free Indonesian state that they adopted modernity and the racist and dehumanising logics of the colonial world, to ensure their position as a semi-periphery nation-state.

Indonesia wields the police operation of modern law in a particularly nuanced way to maintain its control over West Papua and prevent intervention. When the U.N. accepted the Act of Free Choice as legitimate, the international order recognised West Papua as a part of Indonesia. This meant that the claim of West Papuan independence, was relegated to the realm of domestic dispute. Any attempt to interfere from an international rights perspective would then be violating the right to non-intervention (Webb-Gannon, 2021). Indonesian asserts that attempts to intervene and support West Papua and draw attention to the West Papuan struggle, constitutes a violation of the U.N. charter. This was explicitly demonstrated at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, in Indonesia's response to attempts by Vanuatuan delegates to raise concerns around West Papua and its occupation. Indonesian Diplomat Silvany Pasaribu (2020) thus accused Vanuatu of having an "excessive and unhealthy obsession about how Indonesia should… govern itself." Claiming that "to do what is right is to respect the principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries." (Pasaribu, 2020) And suggesting that Vanuatu sought to "instil enmity and sow division… by guising their advocacy for separatism with flowery human rights concern."

(Pasaribu, 2020). Through these international frameworks, Indonesia reaffirms its denial of West Papuan independence. It prevents West Papua from being considered for formal decolonisation through the Special Committee on Decolonisation or under the U.N. charter. Where on the grounds that it is internationally recognised as a subsect of Indonesia, West Papua is denied any capacity to assert itself as a 'Non-Self-Governing Territory' (Honan, 2021).

In an attempt to mitigate the growing resistance in West Papua and some international pressure, from 2019 to 2020 Indonesia suggested and presented the West Papuans with a vote to grant themselves 'special autonomy' as an Indonesian province. However, this special autonomy was wholeheartedly rejected by much of the West Papuan people, who distrust the Indonesians and considered it to be an attack on their rights. (RNZ, 2021) Their proposal had its intended effect however, while generally being rejected by the Papuan people it was used internationally to defend and ignore Indonesia's continued genocide in West Papua. This was explicitly demonstrated by New Zealand's foreign minister Nanaia Mahuta in December 2020, who, when questioned on support for the liberation of West Papua, reproduced Indonesian claims that the West Papuan genocide was a domestic issue. Noting she supported greater/special autonomy, but would not condemn Indonesia's actions, Mahuta instead suggested New Zealand would "share their perspective" on rights within the Pacific region. (Al Jazeera English, 2020)

These claims and perspectives unfortunately do nothing to disparage the Indonesian genocide in West Papua, and instead implicitly reinforce the Indonesian claims over West Papua by denying the possibility of liberation. While New Zealand is entitled to share their perspective that West Papuans are human beings and thus deserving of human rights, this perspective alone is not enough to undo the hundreds of years of racialisation and violence imposed on Black Oceania, not enough to overcome the reality that to the rest of the world, the subjugation and denial of Black life in West Papua is an implicitly accepted but consciously denied condition on which their very lives are structured. In response to New Zealand's perspective, Kwame Ture's (1966) inversion of the Civil Rights Bill question wherein he asserted that "every civil rights bill was passed for white people," that the civil rights bills were written to tell White people not to oppress Black people, rather than to 'give' Black people their freedom helps better frame this. On the broader international scale, for example, the call to share perspective on rights demonstrates a patronising and problematic

conceptualisation of power which absolves New Zealand of any complicity. This being particularly hypocritical in New Zealand's willingness to profit from the Indonesian occupation of West Papua while offering said perspectives (Leadbeater, 2018). Ture (1966) reminds us that New Zealand and the rest of the world, the United Nations, and the like, are in no position to offer their opinions and beliefs around the nature of West Papuan genocide. Instead, the questions they must ask themselves is: why are they unwilling to recognise Black Oceanic life as human, and what are they going to do to stop dehumanising Black life? It is not for them to give or recognise anyone's humanity, but rather to stop denying West Papuans their humanity.

West Papuan Resistance

If we are to speak of liberation in a Black Oceania then recollecting histories and refocusing narratives is key for Hau'ofa. In knowing how and why these violently racist systems came to define our people, we can begin to piece together how we might overcome them. Through understanding these logics and through repeated attempts to challenge these systems, these hierarchies, it becomes clear that the violent oppression of the West Papuan peoples has been allowed to continue, precisely because white supremacy interprets the signifier of West Papuan racial differences as the point of difference which disqualifies them from being recognised as human. By identifying how the dual systems of capitalism and colonisation under modernity continue to allow violence to persist against Black Oceania through racialising and dehumanising the Black life of Oceania, we see that the liberation of Black Oceania necessitates the absolute abolition of these systems and their hierarchical relationalities. I maintain that the future Oceania then, this collective community alluded to by Hau'ofa, cannot exist without the overcoming of these systems, the dehumanising logics of modernity which would disregard the humanity of Black Oceania.

On the onto-epistemic level then, it is clear that the possibility of Black life is precluded from the outset under modernity - this operation being an a priori condition in the very construction of the world of modernity. This is one of the key insights Wilderson (2020) brings to the forefront in his assertion that the historical conditioning of Black relationality through a denial of Black ontological capacity and the imposition of a particular form of slave relation, was structurally critical to the functions of modernity, to the very nature of the world today. Thus, while slave relations prior to the formation of chattel slavery existed in West Papua for example, the particularity of the chattel slave relation which established the

basis of modern capitalism lies in its complete and utter reduction of Black life to that of the commodity form (Williams, 1994).

Further, Wilderson (2020) demonstrates that these historic forms of relationality still shape our worlds today, and that this system of relationality functions to structure and interpret the body of chattel slavery, the Black body, as being incapable of meeting the conditions of being determined human. Where the onto-epistemic legacies of chattel slavery and the denial of Black ontological capacity, function to justify and legitimate the violence of colonialism and white supremacy. Critical to understanding this, Césaire asserts though, is the recognition that these relational forms are reinforced by colonialism's 'boomerang' effect. That is, the manner by which colonialism and the legacies of white supremacy function to dehumanise not only those who are oppressed, but the oppressors themselves (Césaire, 2000). This is because to dehumanise, to render other humans as inhuman, is an inhuman act. The imposition of this specific relational form that established capital in the 16th Century was, Césaire suggests, also the precise moment in which the white world, the colonial world, condemned itself. It is for this reason, Césaire (2000, p. 34) reminds us, that between colonialism and civilisation "there is an infinite distance."

This is also exactly what is meant when asserting that colonialism renders Black existence unintelligible to the white conscience, to actually encounter Black existence as being a site of life and being, white consciousness would also have to confront its inhumanity. To overcome this tension, to ease their conscience, White consciousness perpetually relegates Black existence to the subontological, relating to Black life only as object. Fanon however goes one step further, asserting that rather than Blackness being rendered an unintelligible entity, the structural denial which establishes the foundation of white being, results in Blackness coming to signify not only the absence of human values, but the very negation of these values. Such that colonialism renders Black being "the enemy of values… absolute evil… the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality" (Fanon, 1963, p.41).

Expanding on this, Wilderson (2020) contends that this oppression, this subjugation and denial of the ontological capacity of Black being is the violence which orders life itself, rather than being a laborious task of continual negation, it is a source of libidinal and

ontological jouissance, of pleasure for White being, such that, "the jouissance that constitutes the violence of anti-Blackness secures the order of life itself; sadism in service to the prolongation of life." (Wilderson, 2020, p.92) This element of jouissance in Black oppression perhaps fuelling the reactionary 'Make America Great Again' appeal to a fictive once great America. This once great America was of course only great for a subset of the population, however, for white being, the enslaving of the black world allowed for the flourishing and growth of their economies. They were able to experience a fullness of their lives, their joy, and pleasure, through the violent subjugation and oppression of Black being. What is critical here, however, is the realisation that White being and what Wilderson (2020) names its 'junior allies' secure their existence parasitically through the onto-epistemic denial of Blackness, "White and non-Black subjectivity cannot be imbued with the capacity for self-knowledge and intersubjective community without anti-Black violence" (Wilderson, 2020, p.94). Meaning the very condition of non-Black intersubjective community it structured on anti-Black relations.

How then does an understanding of ontological death relate to the condition of West Papua, of Black Oceania? In the first instance, the peoples of Indonesia are not white and suffered themselves at the hands of white-supremacy, from a purely race-based perspective, which identifies Indonesia as the sole perpetrator of violence in the region, the conditions of oppression West Papuans face could reasonably be considered under an economic and military expansionist lens. Indeed, one of the more perplexing but understandable consequences arising from this type of framing, are the similarities drawn between West Papuan liberation fighters and the so-called Israeli struggle for liberation, with the Star of David flag not uncommon at Free West Papua protests. In this, cultural and religious links are drawn in narratives which portray Indonesia and Palestine as occupying Islamic forces in Judaeo-Christian lands (Webb-Gannon, 2021). If we examine Indonesia in isolation, vilifying the Indonesian peoples and their traditions and religions themselves, then this type of link could perhaps be drawn. However, from the point of view of systemic power, of world-systems, with an analysis of the operations of modernity under global capitalism and the consequences onto-epistemically for Black life, the parameters and complications of the West Papuan situation take on a new significance.

We see through Wilderson (2020) that Indonesia functions as a 'junior ally' in modernity's structural denial of Black life. Indonesia viscerally announces its anti-Blackness

and place in the modern world order through the ongoing massacres and military operations it embarks on as it moves to subdue West Papuan resistance fighters, signifying to the white world that it too, is a player in their game (Ondawame, 2000). If Indonesia's occupation of West Papua is viewed within the broader scope of the world-system of global capitalism, it becomes clear how the imperatives of continual economic growth and exploitation structures their violence. This being imposed first through the neocolonial debt Indonesia inherited from the Dutch. Producing a situation in which Indonesia and its position in the semi-periphery, is structurally dependent on the dehumanisation and violent oppression of Black life, and the increasingly destructive exploitation of our lands.

In the case of Black Oceania, drawing on Stein et al.'s (2017) accounts of the logics of Separability and Enlightenment Humanism, I argue that the Black condition is established through a linking of the two to differentiate and organise the multiplicity of bodies and phenotypes, semiotic signifiers, across not just a racial, civilisational, or developmental hierarchy, but an ontological and metaphysical one too. Where Stein et al. (2017) assert that separability differentiates "humans from one another, ranking them into racial/civilisational hierarchies" and humanism as that which orders moral, mental, and intellectual difference along a linear, white supremacist path. Modernity locks Black life and history within ontological and spatio-temporal boundaries. To separate and determine who counts is included as a part of the count, and who is object by modernity and reduced to the sub-ontological from the outset. In the first instance, as Fanon reminds us, Black bodies, rather than being just interpreted as the absence of 'values,' are rendered the antithesis of values, the antithesis of morals, of mental, intellectual, civilisational, and racial values. This is in part, because a key to the fantasy of ontological security embedded within the notion of the House of Modernity, this fantasy being that of the white conscience, is the need to rationalise and ease the guilt that arrives from the jouissance of Black oppression. There is a need, psychologically for the white conscience to turn away from the visceral truth – the mirror that Césaire holds up, which demonstrates that colonisation has dehumanised them, turned them into monsters. To avoid the psychic trauma such a realisation might have then, to ensure a fantasy of security is maintained, Black existence is reified, treated as mere object, allowing for the enjoyment of this hatred, of this violence which structures modernity without the psychological cost.

Gillespie (2017) argues then, that the viral spreading and sharing of images and scenes of Black death and violence "more than opening the possibility of liberal notions of justice, seem to suture the relationship between the mythical and the real… us[ing] that violence as evidence to further suggest that the Black is not Human. For how can a Human endure such a thing?" (p.7) Thus, when Bambang Soesatyo, the speaker of the People's Representative Council (an Indonesian house of Parliament), declared in 2021 that in a crackdown on West Papuan rebels, Indonesian forces should "destroy them first…discuss human rights later", he demonstrated exactly the degree to which West Papuan life is dehumanised in the overarching white conscience of modernity (Tahana, *RNZ*, 2021). The absence of genuine international outcry at the numerous videos and images of West Papuan deaths at the hands of Indonesian soldiers, the absence of any rebuke or international outcry in the face of such an open-handed admission to dehumanising and opposing West Papuan existence demonstrates the normative nature such a belief. Where a politician announced that human rights did not apply in the killing of West Papuans, with little outrage and no consequences, it becomes clear this logic is rather than the exception, the implicitly accepted norm of modernity. That under modernity, Black existence is denied. The recognition of this reality, of the ontological death of Blackness as a structural condition of our world, opens the possibility that liberation cannot lie within this world, within modernity and the global-capitalist world system. That freedom, a new Oceania, a new world, lies beyond this one.

Having established the framework of ontological death and the police order of modernity as part of the onto-epistemic order which maintain the West Papuan occupation. It is clear that the denial of Black ~~being~~ represents the dark night sky, the abyss, against which the Morning Star is invoked and comes to rise. That is, the logics of white supremacy, enshroud the night in darkness through their dehumanising structures. Against this, Morning Star, the signal of a new day and a new world, shines. Rupturing the particular onto-epistemic order at the heart of the Black condition. In the next chapter this thesis asks in what ways can bringing Oceanian and Black traditions together help us to navigate these tensions? It looks to Black and Indigenous relationalities to aid us in imaging and enacting relationalities which disrupt the onto-epistemic order of modernity. In the following chapter I examine responses from within one side of the radical Black tradition to the logics of white supremacy and anti-Black violence, and the need to look beyond the world.

6. A Morning Star to Come

The knot or quandary posed by the death and denial of Black ontological possibility, represents a critical and primary tension for the navigation towards a new Oceania. Such that it should be clear that the logics of white supremacy, which divides the Pacific against itself, is antithetical to the project of a new Oceania. It is, what Oceania is not. This thesis thus asks how and in what ways, can their struggles and lessons, the analyses, and critiques of white supremacy by the radical black tradition, can aid the struggle towards a new Oceania, and the West Papuan struggle for freedom, the struggle against white supremacy. To do this, I interrogate how the radical Black tradition has responded to the onto-epistemic and metaphysical violence of colonial-capitalism. This is done in particular through the responses of the Négritude, Afro-Pessimist, and black absurdist traditions. Recognising in these traditions the necessity of the need to go beyond this world and its order. The need to invoke of a new world, new ways of relating to and understanding each other and our environments in the struggle for all of Oceania's liberation. Ultimately, this section looks to these traditions to frame and better understand how colonial-capitalism maintains its white supremacist logics on the ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical levels. Further, it examines how resistance has been proposed, how these traditions have sought to overthrow the world. This chapter thus concludes that the colonial-capitalist world is foundationally opposed to Oceanian being. In its unwillingness to accept the value and life of Black Oceania – in its white supremacist foundations, and in its adherence to aqua nullius, this world proves itself antithetical to the prospect of a new Oceania. Instead, a new Oceana calls for us to imagine and strive towards something more.

Négritude, Blackness, & Oceanic Responses

Beginning with the radical Black traditions, I want to note that not all the theorists examined here agree on the degrees to which Black ~~being~~ is denied and opposed by the world. The key differences between these conceptualisations of ontological death and denial inform the different responses to the knot of Black ontological death. In Négritude for example, there is an appeal to historical traditions and values, as the means of dispelling the dehumanising logics of colonial-capitalism. Further, the analyses of the Afro-Pessimist traditions denote a more fundamentally metaphysical/ontological negation of Black life at the

heart of its analyses, and lean into a pessimistic rejection of the world (Wilderson, 2018). While Gillespie's (2018) prospect of weaponised death and absurdist responses lean into the terror of black being in the white conscience and a recognition that there is nothing rational which can be done to overcome this world.

However, what brings these analyses together is that they take as their starting point the recognition of a structural and systematic dehumanisation process central the normative functioning of the modern world. A process through which Black life, black ontological possibility, is denied. I thus explicitly explore the parameters and prospects of ~~being~~ which inform these different attempts to navigate this ontological death examining how their understandings of liberation and resistance relate to these parameters, offering us different paths through the problem of black ontological death. In doing so, I demonstrate what is at stake in the Black Oceanic struggles for liberation and why such a struggle must look beyond the structural and metaphysical limitations of modernity to a new world.

Césaire's (2000) diagnosis of the dehumanisation and the "thingification" of the colonial subject, speaks to the degree to which colonialism and the world it built, are structured on the reduction of Black and Indigenous beings to mere objects to the 'civilised' world (p.42). Critical to this, according to Césaire (2000) was the overarching claim of brining a 'superior order' to the colonies embedded within the Christian Doctrines which "laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity = civilisation, paganism = savagery*." (p.33). As I discussed in chapter five Césaire's overarching critique of colonialism was that in imposing this order and equation, colonialism's boomerang effect serves to dehumanise the coloniser, perhaps even more than it moves to dehumanise or 'thingifies' the colonial subject. He traces the development of the rationale and order underpinning colonialism's dehumanisation procedures through a significant literary and academic figures that sought to justify and make sense of the brutality of colonial violence in the colonial territories.

Césaire's (1950) analysis centres on this notion of civilisation, and its racialised connotations under colonialism as the dividing mechanism, or site of difference, which separates the colonised subject from the colonising subject. While he differentiates the Black racialised condition, he generally speaks to the overarching functions and consequences of colonialism as a whole, what Stein et al. (2017) define as Enlightenment Humanism and its fundamental 'equation' positing the pre-Christian and non-white as savage. His response to

this irrational unwillingness to recognise non-white value, was to turn to the négritude movement. Négritude developed out of the 1930s context of the French colonies of Martinique, Guiana, and Senegal, and was particularly concerned with the analysis and affirmation of a collective notion of Blackness, of the values of a/the 'Black world' (Diange, 2023). Négritude adopted different forms or traditions within the aesthetic and philosophical realms seeking to not only imagine and articulate the values of Blackness, but in other cases also the prospect of a political and philosophical framing through which this Black world and its values might find come into itself. Diange (2023) notes that central to Césaire's turn to the négritude movement – against a world devoid of civilisation, was a reconfiguration of the Cartesian "Who am I?" which seemingly asserts a universal (white) human 'I'. However, the question he and Léopold Senghor were confronted with beyond "Who am I?" was "Who are 'we'? What are 'we'" – the "we" here denoting a particular form of non-human, non '~~being~~' as such, a ~~being~~ which finds itself in a world where the universal subject, the white colonial world view 'I' is presupposed to be the arbiter of all values. Négritude then, sought an answer to this question, a response to colonialism's assertion '*paganism = savagery*' in the affirmation of Black values and Black civilisation, the assertion of a civilised society divorced from the violence and dehumanising atrocities of colonialism.

In this respect the proponents of Négritude turned increasingly to aesthetic traditions to articulate and explore these counternarratives, to demonstrate, strengthen, and envision the values of a Black world. In this, Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1995) exemplifies key tenets of the movement through his poetic inversions of the colonial equation, and invocations of the imagery of colonialism and whiteness as the metaphors and frames of terror and violence, disease and evil, and the resulting search for new figures, new heroes, new narratives through which Black life could interpret itself. As Rosello notes in her (1995) introduction to the *Notebook*, Césaire "reveals the other side of the coin and equates colonialism with a disease ruthlessly gnawing at his country, like a strange virus with no antidote." (p.61) Thus, while recognising that the narrative and histories imposed on the colonies were fundamentally problematic and infused with white supremacist logics, through his representations throughout the *Notebook*, "the narrator carefully creates new heroes or dismisses old ones." (p.62) The reappraisal of heroes and figures in Oceanic histories is also one of the key points echoed by Hau'ofa (2008) in PtR where he notes that in our "reconstructions of Pacific histories of the recent past… we must clear the stage and bring in

new characters… send Captain Cook to the wings to await our summons when it is necessary to call in the Plague." (pp.64-65). For Hau'ofa and Cesaire, there is a shared need to reclaim and reconceptualise our historical narratives, to reframe our being. There is also a shared recognition of the parasitic and disease like violence and consumption in colonised and periphery nations. For Hau'ofa and Cesaire there is shared call to challenge and rewrite historical narratives as part of the struggle to overcome the violence of colonial-capitalism.

In this respect, for Black Oceania, particularly through West Papua, and Papua New Guinea, négritude or forms of Melanesian négritude, have been identified by both Swan (2022) and Webb-Gannon (2021) as playing critical roles in Oceanic liberation struggles. As was examined in the chapter five, the particular form of racialisation that occurred in the definitions and representations of Melanesia in the white consciousness rendered the signifier of Black skin in Oceania, of Black existence, as non~~being~~, determining Black Oceania as subhuman – thingified. Against this, within the Papua New Guinean context, Bernard Narokobi's *The Melanesian Way* (1980) reflected many of the tenets of the négritude movement in his calls to unite under a collective Melanesian/Papua New Guinean identity, one linked through an assertion and affirmation of unifying Melanesian ways of relationality, of respect, and culture.

At the same time Swan (2022) highlights how this movement was reflected at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) where the influences of the Niugini Black Power Group (NBPG) played a critical role in the assertion of Melanesian identities, hosting annual Waigani Seminars from 1967, on Melanesian economics, identity, culture, politics, and a range of other topics, as well as the first 'Niugini Arts Festival' in 1971. Swan (2022) notes that "throughout the 1970s UPNG hosted a number of other Back writers' conferences and arts festivals. These affairs attracted artists from across Oceania and the broader Africana world." (p.128) *The Melanesian Way*, and the search for a collective Melanesian and Papua New Guinean identity, could thus be described as a form of Melanesian négritude. Narokobi's project, the Black Power movements at UPNG and the celebrations of Melanesian literary and aesthetic commonalities demonstrated an underlying search for a narrative and framework through which to understand the Blackness of Melanesian experience, an experience which conditionally arose from both the dehumanising logics of colonialism which rendered our existence antithetical to all values and sought to assert itself as the arbiter of civilisation and 'goodness.' This Melanesian négritude framework sought,

against the depictions of Melanesia and Melanesians as barbaric and savage, to develop a notion of self which could hold us as a collective people through the integration into the modern form of nation-state relationality.

This sentiment was particularly emphasised by Taban Lo Liyong, one of the key leaders and theorists central to the formation of the NBPG, who noted in his '*The Literature of Developed Nations: Négritude*' (1976) that while négritude was not necessarily professed by other Indigenous peoples, in response to colonialism and its violence, Black and Indigenous peoples around the world were "moved to create in response to the experiences which called into being the philosophy of *Négritude*." (p.55) This response then, was key in the formation of important expressions of Melanesian négritude such as '*The Melanesian Way*,' (1980) and '*Voices of Independence: New Black Writing From Papua New Guinea*' (1980). In this, it should be clear that the formation of négritude and the global experiments with its tenets, were fundamentally asserted as a response to the shared experiences of racialisation and dehumanisation which conditioned Black and Indigenous experiences. Melanesian négritude celebrated Melanesia and Melanesians, Black ways of being in its multiplicity. This is not to suggest, à la Sartre (1948), that négritude was a reactionary movement, or an antithetical movement in the broader dialectic of universal human relationality. Rather, négritude resonated with oppressed Black and Indigenous peoples globally as it spoke against the structurally imposed global logics of white supremacy and colonial-capitalist interests. Charging our peoples with the task of affirming and recreating own values and logics which looked beyond modernity's.

Within the West Papuan context, Webb-Gannon (2021) notes that the logics of négritude manifested in the appeals to senses of shared and collectivised Melanesian identities. Drawing on Stuart Hall's (1993) account of cultural identity formation, Webb-Gannon demonstrates how the notion of a shared Melanesian history, while still somewhat problematically established on a form of ethnic or racialised foundation, "is often promoted by West Papuans as the essential West Papuan unifier." (2021, p.85) However, it is a cultural identity which "recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become.'" (Hall, 1993, p.225) In this respect, cultural identity and unity amongst Melanesians/Black Oceania, the navigation of difference

in service of a higher unity, was a central concern of Papua New Guinea and West Papua, informing their struggles for Black liberation.

Drawing on Hall's analysis, Webb-Gannon (2021) notes that this cultural identity as well as being located in historically shared notions and experiences of Melanesian racialised experience, is also, through its recognition of difference, concerned with futurity and the continued process that is cultural identity formation. Asserting that this second perspective on cultural identity, "recognizes that we are always still becoming who we are – it is oriented towards the future as much as it is to the present." (p.85) Key to the West Papuan cultural identity formation and négritude movements is the Koreri tradition, and the recognition of a shared cosmological and spiritual connection to Morning Star across West Papua through the promise of a world to come, a new world, in which the suffering and struggles of Black Oceania, of West Papua, would be overcome (Webb-Gannon, 2021). In this, the Koreri legend, Morning Star, and the figure of Manarmarkeri, signify the hope and possibility of a new world, a new form of relationality. Koreri signals a new way of being which overcomes the onto-epistemic violence which Black Oceania faces. It is in this respect that this chapter invokes the prospect of a Morning Star to come, articulating the possibility of a way of relating to Morning Star which holds within it a call for a new world, free of the white supremacist violence of modernity.

Alongside its representations in cultural, aesthetic, and literary traditions, négritude was also part of broader political and theoretical movements centred around the formation of Black philosophy and Pan-African identities. It played a significant role in imagining the prospect of linked global Black struggles which were reinvigorated by the 'decolonisation' movements of the late Twentieth Century, and the overarching social condemnation (at least outwardly) of imperialism. In this, Senghor's (1994) analysis of négritude aimed to locate it within the broader projects of humanism and sought to articulate the ontological and epistemological consequences of the movement. He sought then, a reinvigorated humanism, a humanism which could move beyond the knots of ontological violence and death which structured white relations to Black life. In particular, he notes that beyond the simple affirmation of Blackness, négritude was "rooting oneself in oneself, and self-confirmation: confirmation of one's *being*." (p.27). It functioned to explore "*the sum of the cultural values of the Black world*" and functioned as a "way of relating to oneself to the world and to others" reflecting a "humanism of the twentieth century" (Senghor, 1994, p.28) It reflected

the assertion of a humanism which sought to transcend the humanism of colonialism and modernity, what we have referred to in this thesis as the 'enlightenment humanism' of Stein et al. (2017).

Writing from the Senegalese context, Senghor's (1994) account of négritude also spoke to broader Pan-African notions of Blackness, and an 'African ontology' grounding this identity in relation to environment and people through an appeal to broader spiritual notions of a oneness, a unified "matter-spirit" of the world (p.29) In this, Senghor's négritude speaks overarchingly to a oneness, a unity, harmony, and rhythm of Blackness, both in relating to the world and through the artistic interventions of the artists of négritude. Thus, while exploring the nuances of Black, and particularly African ontological experience within the frameworks of African liberation movements, Senghor's négritude still remains fundamentally committed to the aesthetic traditions as a means of challenging and overcoming the conditions of Black being. The aesthetic realm opened the possibility of "restoring the order of the world by recreating it through art" which would allow for the "reinforcement of the life forces of the universe… the Being of the universe" (Senghor, 1994, p. 36). Thus, through recognising the values inherent in the Black world, Black being was reinforced at the same time "as interdependent forces and as beings whose being consists in revitalizing ourselves in the recreation of art."

However, as a movement, Négritude was not without its critics and limitations. In the first instance, one of its key critiques arose out of the forms of "essentialist racial approach" and romanticism with which it approached the African Black condition (Rosello, 1995, p.47) This was exemplified in the racial essentialism and Pan-African ontological romanticism, expressed by Senghor for example when he maintains that for the African subject, "He is fundamentally ethical. If the moral law of the African has remained unknown for so long, it is because it derives, naturally, from his conception of the world: from his ontology." (1994, p.31) Further, Senghor's analyses also focused on the notion of *décalage*, a fundamental spatio-temporal inconsistency, a lag or gap between the Black African and African American condition, dividing their struggles. The notion of spatio-temporal differences between Black experiences, however, does not need to necessitate a value judgment and distinction amongst ourselves. Senghor's adherence to some of the tendencies of Enlightenment humanism and linear notions of progress framed his account of négritude in such a way that he was unable to speak to more globally linked struggles for Black liberation.

What was key in global Black responses to the négritude movement outside of Africa, and in the aftermath of these importance contributions, was the recognition that it appealed to often monolithic and Afro-centric notions of Blackness and Black experience. Where, négritude was "accused of erasing political and cultural differences between peoples whose struggle for liberation had not even begun." (Rosello, 1995) Edwards (2004) responds to this by drawing out in *décalage* the value in naming this the difference a recognition its importance. The possibility of movement and resistance by these diasporic communities for, "in the body it is only difference – the separation between bones and members – that allows movement." (Storr, 2009, p.668). However, ultimately *décalage* struggled to navigate difference and multiplicity, Senghor's distinctions struggled to account for the value of the particular shapes struggles took.

The erasure of an account of difference in Black experience was thus one of the key foundations upon which the Caribbean theorist Edouard Glissant structured his critique and analysis of négritude. Ormerod and Glissant (1974) note that one of the main issues facing négritude was that it "was asked to do too much – revolutionize Black literature, cure Black alienation, bring about political reform…" (p. 360) It struggled in this respect, to translate its core tenets into a unifying theory which brought together Black struggles, or into a system/movement in which the logics of the colonial world were overturned. Rather, in the face of renewed forms of violence and oppression, and the imposition of a neocolonial neoliberal economic system which developed in spite of négritude, Glissant asserts that négritude reflected an ideology which was particular to its period of identity formation. Where "Négritude corresponded to a particular historical situation and to a period when, since the African states were not yet independent, cultural activity for Black writers was simply *a sort of cry, a stark demand for dignity as human beings* and as creative artists." (Ormerod and Glissant, 1974, p.361, emphasis added). These acts of resistance, operating within a value schema of civilisation and culture, were thus reinterpreted by the colonial world as expressions of phonê, policed of their political element (Rancière, 1999, p.40). Further, in practice, attempts to challenge modernity by asserting other values alone, were stifled by the fundamental grafting of these values onto European cultural traditions and through the emphasis of European language and cannon.

Négritude was critical to the particular form of African identity formation which was wedded to the establishing of the modern notions of the nation-state, however it was also a

philosophy of oneness, a count of sameness and homogeneity which struggled to explore the nature of difference underpinning its ontological and epistemological foundations. What was fundamentally at issue according to Ormerod and Glissant (1974), was the absence of a disavowal of French culture, an unwillingness or indifference to the articulation of a shared historical notion of Blackness tied to African identity within the Caribbean context. In this, Glissant's focus turned to examining the Caribbean challenge, or struggle for identity, and examining its particularity and what this identity might motivate, suggesting that "one cannot take root in poetic desires, even desires which proclaim one's roots, nor in a distant country, even if it is the mother country, Africa… we must move from desire to reality" (Ormerod and Glissant, 1974, p.361).

Glissant appeals to a form of immanent critique of négritude, a need to move from mere representation in the aesthetic, establishing itself within and against European cultural and literary traditions, to a material reality in which the desire for a collective identity, is achieved. Recognising that this collective identity has not been realised, Glissant looks to the past as a means of reconfiguring our futures, stating that, "the Caribbean islands, despite – and because of – their shared history of European domination and exploitation, have never been able to act collectively. They are still a *future* country: their common history is yet to come." (Ormerod and Glissant, 1974, p.362) As such, while Glissant was critical of the aesthetic traditions of négritude and its inability to affect the material realities of the Caribbean context, he too turned to these traditions in the hopes that for Caribbean theorists, they would invite the prospect of a "prophetic vision of the past." (p.363) These imagined pasts functioned for Glissant to both locate the specificity of the Caribbean narrative – its histories which, through colonialism and the imposition of colonial 'History' have been erased, as well as offer a way forward into the future, through a 'poetics of relation.' (Glissant, 1997)

While the Négritude movement and responses to its analyses were significantly influential in anti/decolonial movements around the world, and particularly in the formation of Pan-Melanesian identities through texts such as '*The Melanesian Way*' (1980), we are yet to liberate our people nor have we brought about a new world through the sharing of these values and demonstrations of culture. Négritude has played a necessary role in the construction and assertion of Oceanian identities. However, as we face new struggles and dangers Oceania, must look to broader and stronger ways of navigating our collective

capacities. Modernity has no future, neither for Melanesia nor the rest of the world, its cracks are showing, and its order is being disrupted (Stein et al. 2017). The ongoing suffering of Melanesia, the economic disparity and poverty in Papua New Guinea, the conflicts over democratic representation and identity, the genocide against West Papua, and the general prevalence of anti-Blackness across Oceania, all these struggles speak to the ontological reality of modernity's violence and the inability of négritude and its localised forms of relationality alone to structurally challenge and overcome it. While négritude played a key role in Melanesian nation-state formation and identity, this identity is still fundamentally subsumed under the logics of modernity which could only interpret the signifier of Black skin as antithetical to humanity.

As a self-oriented assertion of Being, which seemingly operated parallel to a world structured against it, négritude struggled to translate the beliefs, values, and imagery of Black existences past and future into material changes in the conditions of Black life. In this, as onto-epistemic frameworks, the interventions of Senghor and Césaire – the reconfigurations and reinterpretations of Blackness were necessary responses to the forms of colonial violence which served to dehumanise and thingify Black bodies. However, they were often too focused on the challenge of articulating one's Being to a world which from the very outset, was structurally unwilling to recognise their existence. A world which denied them the prospect of disagreeing with its values. As such, négritude faced a form of isolated solipsism, in that the language with which it sought to speak its Being, was ignored by the colonial-capitalist world from the outset. It could only truly be interpreted and understood by other Black lives. In this, the impossibility of a language, a framework through which the colonial-capitalist world-system might realise and accept the humanity of Black being, invites a different response, and a rejection of the world entirely.

Immanence, Metaphysics, & Ontological Terror

> The White World subjects the Black to perpetual, gratuitous violence, and then uses that violence as evidence to further suggest that the Black is not Human. *For how can a Human endure such a thing?* The experience of gratuitous violence secures the semiotics of the white hyper-reality. (Gillespie, 2017, p.7)

The question of immanence was key in Fanon's response to négritude. Fanon's critique of colonialism and the very world it created, was grounded in colonialism's irrationality, its inability to interpret Black ~~being~~ as anything other than the antithesis to whiteness. As Fanon demonstrates in his critique of Sartre's however, the antithetical opposition of Black ~~being~~ to white Being, was not in the service of some larger dialectical synthesis. Black ~~being~~ was not the 'Other' of whiteness, through which the category of humanness would open itself to its contradictions and realise a higher order of humanity, or at least not the 'Other' in the tradition in classical European and colonial theory. Rather, Fanon (1967) asserts that he "existed in triple: I was taking up room. I approached the Other… and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent, and absent, vanished." (p.84) In this, the possibility of recognition by the Other, by white Being, was already fundamentally disclosed, revoked, and denied.

The White Subject refuses Black being as Other, refuses the possibility of ontological opposition, instead enacting the reality of Black ontological death and denial – the absence of ontology. It is this account of Black ~~being~~ which links my analyses of Fanon (1952), and Warren (2018) and Wilderson (2020) whom together I identify as part of the Black Nihilistic tradition. I examine the implications the Black Nihilistic tradition showing how Fanon (1952) Warren (2018), and Wilderson (2020) are linked in their accounts of the ontological necessity of an ending to the colonial-capitalist world of modernity. They are bound by Fanon's (1952) assertion that in his Blackness he "was hated, detested, and despised, not by my next-door neighbor or a close cousin, but an entire race. I was up against something irrational." (p.97). This reflects the fundamental irrationality at the heart of the ontological structure of white Being. Its parasitic relationship is structural and systemic. Such that rather than between individual existences, what the Black nihilistic tradition point towards is the realisation that the parasite is white Being itself which is structured on Black negation. The nature of the white world being that whenever it can do so discreetly, that is without causing too much disruption in the flow of capital, realises itself in the continued and ongoing killing and denial of Black life. Here though, we should however note that what constitutes the parameters of disruption is ever-shifting, for the vast majority of modern history, the enslavement, lynching, and massacre of African-Americans, Black and Indigenous peoples around the world for example, did not disrupt the order of things but rather reinforced them. The daily violence against West Papua fails to disrupt the order of things, but rather reinforces modernity. The

question of disruption speaks more to the degree to which through our resistance, the world, and its onto-epistemic order, its fantasy of security is threatened and challenged.

An account of immanence further functions to inform Fanon's critique of négritude. The immanence of the struggles faced by Black life around the world, the psychological and material violence enacted on Black ~~being~~, and the inability of the white world to encounter the Other of Black ~~being~~, ultimately led him to look beyond négritude to violence as one of the only real mechanisms through which the necessary changes could be enacted. In his chapter 'On National Culture', Fanon (1963) thus offers a critique of the reliance on négritude, on the notion of culture alone, as a means of enacting radical change. He challenges 'Native intellectuals' who seemingly retreat into the historical realities of their pasts as bastions or counter narratives to the dehumanising logics and violence of the colonial world. The problem Fanon identifies with this manoeuvre is that it is fundamentally a reactive antithetical position which structures its response always already in relation to these colonial logics. In the first instance, this derives from an internalising of the generalising nature of colonialism, which invokes in the native intellectual a desire to "give battle to colonial lies… on the field of the whole continent." (Fanon, 1963, p.211) As such, the assertion of a generic Black reality, beyond its unity in shared opposition to its oppression by white supremacist colonial logics, struggles as it is "logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism" whose "condemnation is continental in its scope." (Fanon, 1963, pp.211-212) Consequently, the native intellectual moves to rehabilitate their sense of self and cultural identity through a universal notion of Blackness or belonging. This move however, as Glissant demonstrated, encounters a problem in that while colonialism treats its oppressed subject as ultimately generic, the African-American, Caribbean, Latin-American, and Black Oceanian struggles against white supremacy, are all in important ways fundamentally different from each other.

The second way in which négritude struggled to bring about the necessary changes was that in its retreat into the past, into our romanticised histories, it seemingly neglected the immanent and material struggles of the peoples in the present. Here, Fanon asserts that "on the plane of factual being the past existence of an Aztec civilisation does not change anything very much in the diet of the Mexican peasant of today." (Fanon, 1963, p.209) That is, while these civilisations may have existed in the past, knowing of them without a context in which they materially improve the lives of the poor and disenfranchised, does very little to achieve

one's liberation from colonial violence. He continues then that "you do not show proof of your nation from its culture but that you substantiate its existence in the fight which the people wage against the forces of occupation." (Fanon, 1963, p.223) What he is fundamentally demonstrating is that the search for a national culture in one's history which fails to attend to the material struggle and necessary fight today, is effectively toothless. It falls victim to the misconceptions that colonial-capitalism is capable of interpreting the native culture as anything other than its opposition, and that a national culture consists of ancient treasures and ways of being, rather than "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought… the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence." (Fanon, 1963, p.223) In this, the possibility of Oceanian being and the assertion of a collective Oceanian identity is enacted through its resistance to modernity.

Fanon maintained that the semiotic signifier of his skin colour, the undeniable reality of his very existence, functioned to divorce him from his own humanity in the eyes of Being. He was not even Other. In this respect, Fanon's critique of colonialism held that as a logic, colonialism is insensible to rationality, argument, and compassion, noting that "colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and will only yield when confronted with greater violence." (Fanon, 1963, p.61) Here Fanon is clear in his articulation of a path to liberation, that there is no combination of words and stories, no collections of ancient historical facts, no philosophies which through their articulation would move the coloniser to oppose colonialism. This is because colonialism simply does not think, it does not concern itself with justifications and rationalisations for its actions - profit is its raison d'être, it seeks only to consume and profit, and will ensure the requirements of this form of relation are met at all costs.

In response to the proponents of négritude which sought to highlight the humanity of Black ~~being~~ articulating their values and aesthetic realities, Fanon reminds us that we "will never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes." (Ibid., p.223). What he is suggesting then, is that there is no way to shame or reason colonialism into giving up its power. There is no grammar or language with which the colonial-capitalist world order could be convinced to relinquish its hold on West Papua. It is not a question of knowing and encountering the Other, but the condition of the white Subject that black being is negated. Liberation is thus a question of violence, of struggle, and resistance. Such that Fanon (1963) asserts only a greater violence, a violence which through

conflict and its capacity to end worlds, can fundamentally overturn the structures of the White world. For Fanon, the role of the 'Native intellectual' in this time is supporting the struggle by fostering a national consciousness and helping to provide the framework under which the people unite. It is also in the developing of a national consciousness and the liberation of a nation that they could come to engage in international questions of liberation, for "it is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows." (pp.247-248)

The calls for a United Nations investigation into the human rights abuses in West Papua, while still important as a material task in highlighting modernity's hypocrisy, functions as part of a police order which obscures the ontological violence of the world. It reflects a belief that the order of modernity is structured on liberal pluralistic tenets of justice and distributions of rights, an order in which the fundamental question is how to ensure the distribution of these rights is just and fair, and encompasses all life. Fanon and the Black nihilistic tradition assert however, that the world is structured on white supremacy and anti-Black violence. That the order of the world is secured through the greater capacity for violence that the white world, and particularly the U.S., wields to ensure its power and profits. It is structured on the underlying threat to the rest of the non-white world, that at any given point, liberties, rights, and justice can be suspended if the interests of white supremacy and capital deem them an inconvenience. As has been shown through the plethora of incidents in which the U.S. and its agents through the CIA, have assassinated foreign nationals, invaded sovereign nations, and overthrown democratically elected leaders who sought to challenge this order, any attempts to genuinely resist will be met with violence, a violence which has no care for law, rights, and justice. (Central Intelligence Agency, 1975, released 2002) The question becomes how do we as Oceanian theorists foster an Oceanic consciousness which looks beyond modernity, beyond this world? How do we help foster an Oceanian consciousness which recognises the ontological incompatibility of colonial-capitalism with any project for a new Oceania.

We have seen that the institutions and declarations of human rights, are empty institutions and declarations reflect appealing liberal façade of pluralistically counting all the parts, rather than an actually applicable schema of universal rights. Knowing about the human rights abuses in West Papua while of course necessary for a material analysis of the situation, is not enough to change the order of the world. Through their diplomatic cables, it

is clear that the U.S. and its allies knew about and admitted the illegality and illegitimacy of the 'Act of Free Choice' however, they still chose to accept its legitimacy to enforce their order. It was not just a question of knowing, but a question of power and its interests, of action and challenge. As is made clear from the U.S. and U.N. affirmation of the act despite this knowledge, the interests of profit and capital flow are prioritised over the lives of West Papuans. As such, while the genocidal acts of Indonesia against West Papua has been well documented by West Papuans (Ondawame, 2000) activists and allies, (Webb-Gannon; Elmslie, 2013; Anderson, 2015;), as a result of the colonial-capitalist foundations of modernity and the United Nations, the violence against West Papua and Black Oceania is ignored and supressed to maintain the interests of capital and its endless pursuit of profit. In this the ever pending promise of an investigation into the human rights abuses in West Papua appears to have served only to ease the conscience of modernity and reinforce its ontological security. The U.N. legitimising the Act of Free Choice in the first place allowed for a domestication of the dispute, and denied the possibility that anything could be done even if human rights abuses in West Papua were acknowledged.

Key to the denial of Black ~~being~~, are two motivating factors. In the first instance, there is the psychological alleviation or relief of white conscience that comes from denying Black ~~being~~ the category of humanity, this functioning as part of a vicious self-perpetuating cycle of dehumanisation in which the atrocities committed against Black ~~being~~ because of its ontological denial, seemingly justify its ontological denial. In this, the jouissance of white being in its oppression of Black life, articulated by Wilderson (2020) is realised in the easing of the white conscience. In the second instance, what Warren (2018) asserts is that beyond the easing of conscience, Black ~~being~~ fills the place of metaphysical 'nothingness' – the absent antithesis to being, of non~~being~~/ ~~being~~. His analysis of 'ontological terror' speaks to both the terror of the ontological condition of Black ~~being~~ in its denial, as well as the metaphysical terror represented by Black ~~being~~, the unsettling inversion of metaphysical possibility, the abyssal absence of ~~being~~ it has come to represent under colonial-capitalism.

Warren articulates what he calls an 'ontometaphysics' to develop the logics of humanism and the existentialist traditions, by articulating the pre-ontological manoeuvre in which Black ~~being~~ appears only as a metaphysical absence, an ontological terror. Ontological terror refers to "the terror that ontological security is gone, the terror that ethical claims no longer have an anchor, and the terror of inhabiting existence outside the precincts of

humanity and its humanism." (Warren, 2018, p.4). Black ~~being~~ in its normative condition exists as an excess to white Being as the embodiment of a terror, of the possibility of ~~being~~. Further in the ruptures where Black existence struggles to assert its being it invokes in the white consciousness an ontological terror, a terror which strikes at the heart of their very being as the assertion of a possible Black Being undoes the very order by which (white) Being exists. It is a metaphorical pulling of the rug from under Being, an instance in which, what (white) Being thought to be some form of universal way of understanding and relating with the world, is in fact shown to be the product and continuation of an abhorrent violence. If as Stein et al. (2017) suggest, modernity's fantasies of ontological security are collapsing, that it is showing cracks, Warren (2018) extends this in the recognition that the inexistence of Black ~~being~~ is the very precondition of modernity, the foundational error (of Being) which condemned the house from the outset. It is the critical kernel of truth at the heart of modernity – that it was and is only ever structured on violence and dehumanisation, established on the violent denial of the possibility of a common humanity, of a shared notion of being, in this the terror of its possible life and what that means for Being. Black ontological death, the continued subjugation, policing, and oppression of Black ~~being~~ gives rise to Black ontological terror which recognises that Black life and the possibility of Black Being is conditional on the ending of the world of modernity and its order.

In his account of the metaphysics of ontological terror, and his commitment to a Black nihilism, Warren (2018) examines two ways in which responses to this question/problem of ontological death have attempted to sidestep, ignore, and turn away from it. He examines in Black humanism and Post-metaphysical reasoning, ways in which this problem is side-stepped instead of faced. In the first instance, Black humanism – in which we might place négritude – tries to navigate the problem/question of Black ~~being~~ via an appeal to metaphysical reconfigurations and inversions, moving through aesthetic and philosophical traditions in the belief that they hold the capacity to articulate Black Being against modernity. Thus, "Black humanists lay claim to the *being* of the human (and the human's freedom) through metaphysical thinking and instruments." (Warren, 2018, p.4) As can be seen in some of the tendencies expressed in the négritude movement.

Here the appeal to a metaphysical difference between historic and futuristic Black worlds and modernity, holds open the possibility of a reconfiguration of the world – consequently, the main political act one can take is to reimagine these pasts and bring their

realities into the modern context. The post-metaphysical tradition following hermeneutic and scientific reasoning, challenges the foundations of the ontological question of Black ~~being~~, advocating for an overcoming this problematic via a "self-consumption of this ground [metaphysics] through hermeneutical strategies, unending deconstructions, and forms of pluralism (such as hermeneutic nihilism)" (p.5). This often takes the form of scientific appeals to notions such as the biological falsity of race, or pluralistic discussions around according each partition their appropriate value in a base logic of equivalence. It thus finds its form in calls for more representation and participation, more recognition, and tolerance.

What Warren asserts against these, is that both responses to the violent realities of Black ~~being~~ and its brutal subjugation, fundamentally struggle to face and deal with the question of being/Being/~~being~~, and instead attempt to sidestep the problem posed by Black ontological realities. Warren turns to face the abyssal "(non)relation between Blackness and Being by arguing that Black ~~being~~ incarnates metaphysical nothing, the terror of metaphysics, in an anti-Black world." (p.5) The fundamental structure and notion of Being qua Being is precisely the problem, that the question of metaphysics and nothingness is fundamentally established on the non~~being~~ of Blackness, the suturing of a metaphysical notion of nothingness onto Black ~~being~~ "objectifying *nothing* through the Black Negro" (2018, p.6, emphasis added). Working within the Heideggerian tradition, Warren (2018) counters Heidegger's definition of *Dasein* through an account of Black ~~being~~, ~~being~~ which, rather than having the capacity to concern itself with its Being is denied this possibility and thingified. Instead rendered as 'ready-to-hand,' a tool, such that Black life is "introduced to the metaphysical world as available equipment in human form." (p.6). Where Black ~~being~~ is not just any tool, it is the "quintessential tool Dasein uses" (p.8).

Warren identifies in Heidegger's emphasis of *Da-sein* over *Dasein*, and his recentring of the 'thrown-ness' (-) of being (sein) into a world which is the 'thereness' (Da) of being, a refocusing on the role of suspense/suspension in examining how law as an institution is conditionally established on the outlawing of and attack on Black ~~being~~. Drawing on Agamben's notion of the "state of exception" wherein the functions and binaries of law are suspended in relation to sovereign power, Warren (2018) links this to the Heideggerian concept of 'suspension' or "moment of indecision" which occurs with regards to the need to "close the openness of Being's thrown-ness" (p.94) That is, the indeterminacy or aleatory moment (thrown-ness) which fundamentally underpins Being, lies in its essential indecision,

the undecidability through which its 'thrown-ness' invokes a never satisfied need to enclose itself. The undecidability of thrown-ness results in a tension, an anxiety, which Heidegger refers to as 'suspension' but which also, for white Being, constitutes the necessary anxiety in the unfolding of Being, the indeterminate possibility of one's being, giving rise to the question of one's Being, which is to assert itself as *Dasein*.

What Warren suggests however, is that for Black ~~being~~ white supremacy structures the relationship to this indeterminacy and suspension through a schema of ontological terror which "function[s] to outlaw Black ~~being~~" (2018, p.94). Further, he examines the role of law as a form of metaphysical ordering which serves to locate Being within a particular spatio-temporal configuration. Thus, the always present 'self' of law as an individuated unit which is open to interpretation, its particularity, is framed against the past of legal precedent and future of continued adherence to cannon and tradition. Warren notes that through its adherence to an ever-present self, "the law is a primary vehicle for Western linear temporality, and this sustains its mythic nature" (2018, p.95). Further, as Hartman (1997) asserts Western law utilises its different spheres to enact the façade of inclusion, while ultimately policing and denying the capacity for Black ~~being~~ to partake and count – to be in its order. This explicitly being established through her account of the thirteenth amendment's inability to "confer basic civil rights to the formerly enslaved" (1997, p.169). Hartman notes that this exclusion was structurally imposed through a distinction between two spheres of social relation, where the police function of Western law conceptualised the slave relation "not [as] a public relation between the slave and the state but a private relation between two persons." (1997, p.169) Thus, by shifting between different spheres, distinguishing between the public and private in regards to the thirteenth amendment, or, international and domestic as we see in the case of the Indonesian occupation of West Papua, modernity's police order obscures the possibility of a conflict with the order itself, relegating it to private or internal dispute. It presents the façade of recognising and humanising Black suffering to secure sympathy and ease modernity's conscience. This hiding the reality that Black being is outlawed through modernity's constant shift between legal spheres of influence to absolve itself of responsibility.

Through these shifts, Black ~~being~~ is outlawed, that is relegated to the outside of law as the negation and absence of rights. In this it is further denied its present, denied its capacity to enact in an ontologically secure now, Black ~~being's~~ pseudo-appearance within a

police count is always transient, applied to maintain the façade but not change the order itself. This, Warren (2018) maintains is demonstrated through systems such as manumission in the North, whose spatio-temporal particularities – one's freedom being conditional on 'freedom papers', the presence of a document signed by a white man, meant that this freedom was incomplete and imperfect. To lose one's papers, for example, to not have them on you when confronted by white being, would be to fundamentally suspend one's ~~being~~, giving rise to the possibility they might be captured, kidnapped, and re-enslaved in the South. Their freedom was essentially transitory. Ontological terror as a legal strategy "places freedom in an indefinite future, but a future that will never arrive." (p.95) Consequently, the liberation of slaves through manumission was the promising of a false freedom, a false assertion of selfhood which could be suspended at any time. In the requirement of the presence of freedom papers as ontological signifiers, freedom was always already determined in the eyes of the white man, the oppressor, who inspected the papers and determined their legitimacy of this claim to a shared humanity. Legal freedom, insofar as it is determined by the function of law, reinforces white Being as the arbiter of justice and legitimacy, which is ontological structured on Black non~~being~~.

If Black ~~being~~ is the quintessential tool of White ontological reality, to rupture its readiness to hand, to break with destabilise the ontological order itself is to call the nature of being and humanity into question. Through its rupture, its 'not working as it is supposed to' and its challenging of the ontological order, Black ~~being~~, makes clear that its struggle contains within it an ontological revolution (Warren, 2018, p.171). What has been seen in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter protests, is modernity responding with more violence as the white supremacist order of the world, unable to accept its complicity, doubles down on its police order. Such that the call for abolition and dismantling of the police state was "co-opted, diverted, and repackaged as its opposite" (Ciccariello-Maher, 2021, p. 153). These resistances seeking to disrupt the onto-epistemic function of Black life, are met with the façade of recognition and a reinforcing of the police state, both in the literal and Rancièrian sense. Hence in 2023 for example, reactionary white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements are on the rise in the U.S. and around the world. This has been accompanied by increased militarisation of the police operations through the development of facilities such as Atlanta's 'Cop City' (Alfonseca, 2023) and in the Pacific through agreements such as AUKUS (Fuatai, 2023).

Ontological terror speaks to the prospect that there is no possibility of Black ~~being~~ as its conditional absence is precisely what allows white consciousness, white Being to persist. Thus, against the very ontological and metaphysical framings which produce this world; what is critical for the possibility of Black Being, is the imperative of fighting towards its ending, the ending of the very notion of being and the ontometaphysical structures of colonial-capitalism upon which it is established. What is at stake in the struggle to overcome Black ontological death, is a critical call to end the world, the abolition and erasure of its order, its structures. Here, Fanon reminds us that "you do not turn any society… upside down with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning… to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing." (1963, p.37) The struggle for Black liberation is at its heart is a fundamental call and commitment to enacting a violence which seeks to oppose and overturn violent world. It is motivated by the hunger to live, to be-in-the-world. It is a resistance grounded in the absolute drive to persist; a revolt grounded in the simple need to breathe. It is a violence that seek to ruptures the onto-epistemic order of the world, the ontological fantasy of modernity to assert the reality of Black being. It is only in resistance that a national and collective consciousness is realised. Only in the act of opposing a violent institution that the question of ~~being~~/Being is overturned, through a resistance which takes as its very condition the end of the world.

Given this demand for the end of the world, and the fundamental emphasis of the importance of violence within the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilist traditions, a question remains. If, as Fanon suggests, colonialism can only be challenged when confronted with a greater violence, what does that mean in a world where nation-states such as the U.S. have a monopoly on violence. When the U.S. has such powerful state surveillance and policing apparatuses, when the U.S. outspends the rest of the world's military, is there a greater violence than what the U.S. is capable of administering, and if so, what does that violence look like? Gillespie (2017) interrogates this question through his account the prospect of weaponised death. For Gillespie, the absurd violence which conditioned his encounter with the world was exemplified in the aftermath of a wake for a local rapper Lor Scoota. As members of the Black community in Baltimore celebrated the life of one of their members, they danced and listened to his music, expressing their joy and appreciation for his life, they were met with violence as the police intervened and imposed a curfew on the community.

The riot police descended on the mourners, armed with riot shields, and brandishing automatic weapons, and aiming them at the crowds they were ordered to disperse. In the moment in which he saw the guns pointed at him, Gillespie asserts that two things became clear, first, there was a recognition of the absolute need for revolution, for a radical change to the world, manifest in the blind violence which targeted his communities, what he describes as "an impulse to destroy the simulation and return to a new Real…" (p.5), second, witnessing the "militarized guns, the riot shields, the coordination and discipline of the force" Gillespie was made aware of the brutal recognition that, "if a revolution were to come, we could never win." (p.5) While there were "glimmers of hope for the future," faced with a world and its history of anti-Blackness – a world whose peace is established on mutual capacities for violence, and the reality that modernity and U.S. hegemony are structurally committed to the denial of Black ~~being~~, the likelihood of a victorious revolutionary conflict seemed increasingly dire if not impossible to Gillespie.

This realisation entails for him a conflict with the very symbolic and semiotic order of the world, which, drawing on Baudrillard's analysis of terrorism as that which attempts to "rupture the system of semiotics through an equally confounding semiotic" asserts the need to become ontological terror (2017, p.6). This conflict with the semiotic order of the world follows from Fanon's assertion that colonialism is incapable of thought and reason, that there is not a language with which it could be convinced of ~~Black~~ humanity. Gillespie carries this analysis further however surmising that that even in death, Black ~~being~~ and the spectacle of its execution serves to further dehumanise and reify its non~~being~~. Noting that the sharing of viral videos of Black death, rather than invoking an actual moral or ethical response from white Being, serves to further reinforce and perpetuate the exact hyper-reality the ontological fantasy it is used to challenge. If not even the death of Black ~~being~~ can function to enact change, to rupture the logics and relationalities by which its non~~being~~ is structured, then what is there left to do? That is the fundamentally nihilistic question Gillespie is left with. Responding to this realisation, Gillespie proposes that the question that Black ~~being~~ is confronted with, is not how, or in what way is life possible, but rather, how it dies in the White World.

What was demonstrated to him was that at its most fundamental the ontological terror and violence of the U.S. Police state produces a situation in which as a Black ~~being~~, in a world which needs your death to survive, the nihilistic and absurd choice Black ~~being~~ is faced

with is how one would prefer to die. That is "the moment they police raised their guns at us… the horrifying thing it revealed was that I had very little say whether or not I lived or died." Faced with the immanent possibility of death, Gillespie leans into the notion of terror that Black ~~being~~ represents, to take the metaphysical nothingness and embrace the prospect of death, to imagine, as our species enters the Anthropocene the necessary death of the 'world' as we understand it. And to ask what it means then to 'die lit.' While in many ways the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilist traditions articulate the ontological and structural conditions and questions Black Oceania faces. As someone anchored in the Oceanic tradition, I am called to ask how Hau'ofa (2008), and Wendt (1985), might engage with and respond to this idea of the prospect of weaponised death. While I acknowledge the value of Gillespie's response to the absurdity of the situation, to the immense violence wielded by the U.S., the call to die lit in Oceania does not offer us a means of enacting our roles as custodians of the Pacific Ocean. The importance of good relation to past, present, and future generations of Oceania means that a nihilistic weaponisation of death, while appealing when faced with the overarching enormity of our struggle, fails to meet these relational requirements. Where Oceania instead calls upon us to imagine other ways through this knot.

The important question for Oceania I think is less about how to overcome the analyses raised by Fanon, Warren (2018), Wilderson (2020), and Gillespie (2017), and instead, what, and how do their analyses make sense of and apply to our current contexts. Warren's (2018) and Hartman's (1997) accounts of the fundamental ways in which law is structured on the denial of, and opposition to Black ~~being~~ for example, gives us tools to explain why, on a structural and systemic level, institutions such as the U.N. are incapable of recognising the peoples of West Papua as human. Gillespie's (2017) analysis helps make sense of the ways in which the proliferation of images and videos of the violence in West Papua, rather than necessitating investigations into Indonesia's actions, is instead met with legalistic and bureaucratic deflections to ease the conscience of white Being. Fanon's recognition of the need for revolutionary violence and the development of a national consciousness asserts the need for active and material resistance to the logics of colonial-capitalism. Wilderson's (2020) argument that all social relations are determined by white supremacy as the overdetermining logic of oppression, reminds us that what is required is the end of this world in general. Through these analyses it is clear that the manoeuvres by institutions such as claims by the U.N. of 'not knowing enough,' or by law makers who assert that the question of

West Papua is domestic and does not concern international perspectives, are in fact police operations employed by colonial-capitalism to maintain its power. They serve to shift the disagreement from a structural challenge to the systemic white supremacy which produces the current world-system, to a domestic, private, or interpersonal conflict between equal competing parties.

Colonial-capitalism obscures onto-epistemic conflict into a framework of pluralistic 'counts' in the service of democratic equivalence, wherein the question falls to West Papuans to prove their humanity and oppression – that they are deserving of human rights. Where the evidence of Indonesian violence against West Papua has been accrued, Black Oceania must also beg for its humanity. All this while Indonesia suppresses West Papuan freedom and profits of the destruction of West Papuan lands. In 2023, death across Black Oceania more than ever then appears to reinforce the reification of Black ~~being~~ in the White world of modernity. It shows it is a world which can only interpret the capacity to endure the inhumane reality of an anti-Black world as inhumane, further reifying its non~~being~~. This is particularly stressed by the racialised nature of the existential threats facing Oceania, where we face rapidly increasing climate change, the possibility of nuclear powered conflict and struggle for hegemonic control over global capital and Pacific Ocean trade lines, and the consequences of a capitalist world system structurally conditioned on the destruction of our environments and exploitation of our resources.

The immanence of these threats and their consequences for Oceania, as well as the general disinterest globally in our plight, necessitates that we take seriously the ontological and epistemological interventions of the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilistic traditions. For a Black Oceania however, I think there are limitations to which the hopelessness of the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilist traditions can make sense of and map on to our contexts, speak to our histories, and our sense of perseverance as a people. I look then to the Black Feminist and Indigenous responses to Afro-Pessimism and the Black nihilist traditions, to frame the prospects of social life and ontological possibility contained in Black Oceania's Indigenous relationalities to water, land, and spirit, examining how our ancestors have responded to the prospects of the death of worlds, and what they might offer us as we face new uncertainties.

7. To Which We Belong

Black Feminisms and Oceanic Indigeneity's

> Love is not senseless, even if it could promise nothing and save no one. For grieving sisters, what other choice is there? …love is not yet exhausted. It is a web of relation without proper terms or certain outcome… It is a story that blossoms in the Black morning. (Hartman, 2022, p.43)

Finally, we come to the question of what this all means for Oceania? That is, what follows from the recognition that in the first instance, colonial-capitalism denies water its place as a world – as a site of being and ontological possibility. In the second, that colonial-capitalism is ontologically structured on the denial of Black being in and of itself. If Hau'ofa asserts that one of the most important relations to the establishing of a new Oceania lies in our collective Indigenous Pacific ways of relating to water, what does it mean for our continued existence under a colonial-capitalist world system which treats water as aqua nullius and denies its reality as a site of ontological possibility? If one of the key characteristics of a new Oceania is its capacity to navigate the differences and multiplicities which comprise it, what does it mean for our existence in a world which is structurally anti-Black, conditioned on the denial of Blackness as a site of being?

To answer these questions, I appeal to Tiffany King's '*The Black Shoals*' which links Black and Native/Indigenous relationalities through the metaphor of the 'shoal' as an intermediary space between land and sea, between these shifting theoretical traditions. In particular, King demonstrates how Black and particularly Black Feminist responses to the violence of colonial-capitalism are interwoven with Indigenous resistances. Where shoals serve as the "analytical, theoretical, and methodological sandbars" of her analysis (King, 2019, p.10). Within the Oceanian context, Morning Star, and through the Koreri myth, the promise of a Morning Star to come, of a new world, might make more sense within the Black Oceanian context as a site of interwoven Indigenous Oceanian and radical Black Feminist traditions. This is not to suggest that the links I draw between Oceania and Black Feminist traditions are new links, where Swan (2019) demonstrates how Oceania has historically looked to Black Feminist traditions in struggles for liberation. This being particularly relevant in the case of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, where leaders such as Fiji's Amelia Rokotuivuna who, as director of Fiji's YWCA in 1972 was key in the formation

of spaces of "radical praxis… around issues of decolonization, ecological justice, 'Third World' feminism and anti-nuclear testing." (p.169-170). Further travelling to nations such as Ghana and Kenya on behalf of Pacific liberation movements, Rokotuivuna demonstrated the internationalism and links between these struggles, the need to bring our theories and analyses together to challenge colonial-capitalism and its violences (Swan, 2019).

When engaging with Black Feminisms and Indigenous relationalities, particularly as a son of Oceania, I think a degree of honesty and openness to and with oneself is of critical importance. This helps make sense of ourselves and how we are engaging with the theorists, but it also highlights the degrees to which we must confront our own prejudices and gaps. That is, when engaging with Black Feminist and Indigenous theorists and texts, in which so much of the author's self is interwoven with the text, reflection on one's own positionality and location in relation to engaging the text is important. In this, if I am being honest, writing parts of this section have been challenging, in part due to the role of Black m/othering and the proliferation of black life in an anti-black world. Critical to this has been the examinations of the role and significance of my own mother and mothering within the Black Feminist traditions. Having lost my mother to breast cancer as a child, watching her body go into decline as the illness took its hold and left her bedridden, there is a pain which comes with reflecting on the figure of the mother and mothering as a source of liberation. It is a pain of absence. The absences experienced by a diasporic Papua New Guinean in New Zealand. It was accompanied then with a loss of identity, the loss of a figure who could help make myself of my identity, of my skin colour and the way the world would come to treat me. My working class, East Auckland raised pākehā father, had neither the time nor the language and experience to fill these roles, so my siblings and I filled them ourselves, found our own languages for making sense of our differences. Throughout my life I have turned to theory as a means of helping me make sense of the world and the struggles around my existence and experience, and while it is difficult at times, I look to Black Feminist theory here as liberatory practice, as part of the process of healing as well (hooks, 1994). I turn then to black mothering as a symbol of the persistence of black life and its resistance to an ontological order of social death under colonial-capitalism.

In this, Caines (2023) notes that Black feminism is not a homogenous unity, that not all Black feminisms are created equal. In this she appeals to revolutionary or 'radical Black feminism' as a "feminist ideology that seeks to fundamentally transform and decolonize

societal structures… it emphasizes the need for systemic change." This is juxtaposed with radical liberal (rad-lib) Black feminism which "has diluted many core principles and objectives of revolutionary feminism" where rather than systemic change, rad-lib feminism "prioritises [a] shift to individualistic perspectives and experiences, focusing on personal empowerment" (Caines, 2023). Rad-lib feminism appeals to intersectionality, however, only to enact an "identity reductionism, the essentializing of identities." (Caines, 2023). Against these forms of feminism, in her recognition of the importance of decolonising feminism in the Pacific, Susanna Ounie-Small's (1995) critique of liberal feminism recognises that its focus on "individualistic equal rights, which they consider to be the essence of feminism" produces situations in which calls to liberal feminist freedoms produces situations in which "if women from Indonesia, France, and PNG are compelled to do military service, they might have to go to West Papua, Kanaky, and Bougainville to kill people who are struggling for independence." (p.20, vol 9 tok bilong pasifik). Where the rights secured by these liberal feminism, even radical liberal feminisms, serve ultimately to strengthen colonial-capitalism's order. Radical Black feminism then, is the focus throughout this thesis is, as that which requires a "challenging and transforming structures of power that perpetuate inequality, including colonial legacies and imperialist practices." (Caines, 2023). It appeals then to a Black feminism which both holds and surpasses the nihilism and pessimism of the Afro-pessimist traditions, and looks beyond the meek individualism of Rad-lib feminism.

One of the main critiques levelled at the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilist traditions by radical Black feminism, is that their focus on Black ~~being~~ and ontological denial/exclusion serves to fundamentally overdetermine their analysis and cloud their conceptualisations of liberation (Malaklou & Willoughby-Herard, 2018). Afro-pessimism emphasises theoretical and structural analyses of ontological or social death and exclusion over the realities of persistent struggle, community, and life embedded within the Black Feminist traditions. In this, there are tendencies within the Black nihilist and Afro-pessimist traditions towards overvaluing forms of militant struggle, exemplified in the overemphasis of violence and frames of suicidality in the works of Fanon (1963), Warren (2017), and Gillespie (2019). Against these perhaps monolithic conceptualisations of ontological death, Malaklou and Willoughby-Herard (2018) argue that the Afro-Pessimist tradition and its emphasis on a fundamental nihilistic denial of hope in the world, ignores the reality/possibility of a multiplicity of Afro-pessimism's. The possibility of Black Feminist responses and

engagement with the analyses of Afro-pessimism and Black nihilism, these difference responses being explored by Malaklou and Willoughby-Herard's (2018) edition of *Theory and Event* which collectively asks what can be made of bringing Afro-pessimism and Black feminism into conversation.

They are not juxtaposed as binary or gendered oppositions, but rather to examine how Black Feminism and its relationships with and shifts in Oceania engage with and respond to the questions of ontological death and denial. These texts are engaged to explore what they have found of value in Afro-pessimism, what they have disliked, and why some theorists, such as Willoughby-Herard refuse and disavow the Afro-pessimist traditions. While Wilderson suggests that Afro-pessimism is an extension of the traditions of Black feminism, Malaklou and Willoughby-Herard (2018) maintain that the establishing of this relationship is "one-directional. Black feminism is not tethered to Afro-pessimism…Afro-pessimism crashes into Black feminism, sometimes at Black feminism's peril." (p.15). In this respect, this thesis turns to the radical Black Feminist tradition to facilitate an Indigenous Oceanic movement through the hopelessness which underpins the Afro-Pessimist and Black nihilist traditions, bringing the insights of the Black Feminist tradition, into conversation with Indigenous Oceanic relationalities.

Thus, a key area in which the Black Feminist tradition diverges from the Afro-pessimist traditions lies in its response to the prospect of ontological or social death; where the Afro-pessimist tradition refuses hope, leaning into a seemingly nihilistic revolt on the grounds of ontological exclusion. Against this, the radical Black Feminist traditions engaged here navigate this exclusion through an explicit refusal of hopelessness. This refusal of hopelessness, however, is not a refusal of the underlying tenets of the Afro-pessimist and Black nihilistic traditions. Wilderson himself stresses the indebtedness of Afro-pessimism to the Black Feminist works of Saidiya Hartman, Sylvia Wynter, and Hortense Spillers, and their accounts of ontological exclusion as Black women, wherein "Afro-pessimism is made possible by the critical labours of a particular *Black* feminism." (Wilderson, 2016). For Malaklou and Willoughby-Herard recognising that "*the sociality and intellectual frameworks Black people create are structurally meaningless and available for destruction…*" and that they "*have no answer to that fact of Blackness*" (Malaklou & Willoughby-Herard, 2018, p.6, emphasis in original) engage Black feminisms and an account of 'social life' on the grounds that they have not needed an answer to this question previously to resist. In this, the Black

Feminist tradition holds together two realities at once, acknowledging this predicament yet still enacting the struggle for liberation, searching for horizons of liberation.

Malaklou and Willoughby-Herard (2018) assert that "Black feminism theorizes Black sociality and relationality *independent* of social death… Black feminism demands to undo the world independent of Afro-pessimism." (p.7) Thus, Black feminism does not necessarily move to dispute the 'structural meaninglessness' by which acts of Black resistance can be reduced, undermined, and overturned in the white world. It instead responds to the question of social death both in theory and in practice, through Black women's radical capacity to exceed their realities, their worlds, and turn away from despair. This is both a theoretical manoeuvre, in terms of refusing the question, but also a practical and material one, derived from its context. Wherein the capacity to exceed realities, to look beyond the very ontological constraints of one's being or non~~being~~ is and has been the only way in which Black women, in which Black life has persisted. As such, if Gillespie (2017), building his analysis of Warren and Wilderson's nihilisms leans into a form of irrationality, a Dadaist nihilism which embraces the weaponisation of death, the Black Feminist tradition counters this by embracing an irrational, yet necessary disposition towards the weaponisation of Black life, Black living, Black love.

Radical Black m/othering, as the active source and caretaker of Black life/ ~~being~~ is a critical act of resistance and violence against a white-supremacist world. In this, Black m/othering is active, Black m/othering is "a *doing* – not a reified figure but a set of practices of meditation, invocation, reflection, and self-undoing." At the same time Black m/othering as an act demands "self-love, dignity, fighting back in the face of real danger and unpredictable but acknowledged sacred and utterly profane queerness." In this, I want to be clear that mothering as a concept is not expressed here as being structured by gender binaries or biological relations, this being particularly important for me as someone who was in many ways mothered by his sisters. Instead, Black m/othering as an act, speaks to the role of persevering and nurturing Black life, creating the other, in an anti-Black world, to the infinite multiplicity of instances in which through their capacity to recognise and reject the hopelessness of the world in the search for something more. Such that "Black m/other*ing* births the soldiers who unmake the slave economy and property relations." (Malaklou & Willoughby-Herard, 2018, p.) Against the afro-pessimist assertion of social death, Black m/othering and the radical Black Feminist tradition concerns the fundamental affirmations of

social life, of the continuous project of fugitive rebellion and antagonism with colonial-capitalism.

The radical Black Feminist tradition speaks to the significance of Black m/others, who through love and care perpetuate Black life and the promise of a new world, a better world, while holding the pain and suffering for their communities. Here, Hartman's (2022) '*Litany for Grieving Sisters*' explores the significance and consequences of the refusal of a world which opposes Black life, a world dead to Black ~~being~~. The nominal sister of the text "refusing the dead world, recoiling from the pile of corpses… looks away from the carnage and moves ahead, trying to take in as little as she can without stumbling" continuing on her march through the dead city (2022, p.40) Hartman (2022) expresses the bleakness of the world and the reality that the sister "has never known herself separate from grief" (p.39) The sister is subjected to violence, faces a world hostile to her and is called to carry the roles of others throughout her life "she knows not to wait for rescue; no one will come." (p.40) At the same time however, the sister through all this, continues to trudge forward, to continue to exist "she conducts herself as if some other arrangement might be possible… as if the crisis of *mere* survival… might be averted." (p.43) There is a fundamental drive to keep moving forward, to keep going, enacted through Black m/othering. Black feminism perseveres in the face of this bleak violence, the face of this grief and the ontological and social death that colonial-capitalism imposes on Black being, turning to social life, to love and compassion, to relationalities which foster hope.

I contend that one of the refusals at the heart of the Black Feminist tensions with Afro-pessimism is derived from a difference in the ontological focal point of these traditions. Wherein the orientation of being constitutes the fundamental difference between their analyses. Central then, to the Afro-pessimist tradition is an orientation of being towards a world which overdetermines its being '-in-ness.' Where the 'in-the-world' focus of being for Afro-pessimism and Black nihilist traditions, their focus on the world into which being is thrown, directs their analysis to the world as such, its logics, and perceptions. Their concern is often with the way in which Black being is interpreted by power, by colonial-capitalism as the world-system and thus as the world. For Fanon (1963), his critique of national culture, seemingly reflects this perspective, where his argument that national treasures and traditions, movements of négritude, are incapable of convincing the coloniser of Black humanity, Black ontology. His critique is fundamentally structured on the question of perceptibility, of the

ways in which the world counts and miscounts its parts. Similarly, Warren's appeal to ontological terror, and Gillespie's affirmation of the need to die lit, reflect perspectives which privilege the power held by colonial-capitalist institutions and their inability to interpret Black being. Against this, radical Black Feminist traditions turn towards the inherent power enacted through Black relationalities, through the acts of m/othering and perseverance in the face of a world antithetical to their existence. The radical Black Feminist traditions are at times, less concerned with 'the-world' and more the 'being-in,' the relationality Black being enacts as it faces the prospect of a dead world, of a world antithetical to it. It thus asserts a radical hope, an ontology of being-for, or being-towards, where the relationalities and orientations which comprise Black being, which deny it is ontological possibility, are exceeded and overcome upon the horizon of a new world.

This is not a simple solipsism, a turning away from the world and into one's being. Rather, the radical Black Feminist tradition speaks to an understanding of relationality as a necessary component in structuring the world. It thus looks to enact the relational forms which rupture and break the colonial-capitalist order, hence the emphasis of Black m/other*ing* the act of reconfiguring our realities and relationalities, the emphasis of another 'arrangement.' One of the key ways in which it exceeds the structural and ontological limitations of Afro-pessimism is in appeals to a reconfiguration of the spatio-temporal structures of modernity and its turn away from humanism. Hartman exemplifies Black Feminist literary and theoretical reconfigurations of colonial-capitalist spatio-temporalities in her 'Venus in Two Acts' (2008). Through this essay, Hartman offers a meditation on the figure of Venus through an exploration of the life and death of a young Black girl who appears in a legal indictment against a slave ship captain for her murder. Venus is just one amongst the "hundreds and thousands of other girls who share her circumstances." (Ibid, p.2) Girls who were abducted, enslaved, raped, and murdered under chattel slavery and colonial-capitalist systems of exploitation and violence. The girl as Venus here, is also named in an appeal the figure of Black Venus where "no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said." Her existence, her life, can thus only be asserted through the trace of a name where "we only know what can be extrapolated from an analysis of the ledger or borrowed from the world of her captors." This, however, is not enough for Hartman. The bleak reality of these lost histories, these lost pasts, and the fact that Black being has to be traced through ledgers

and archives, fails to inspire change, to motivate actions. Hartman thus looks for something more in these narratives.

To overcome this reality, where Black histories are erased and obscured, Hartman embarks on a programme of rehabilitating these pasts through literary and theoretical analysis. Hartman (2008) notes that despite the absence of accounts which spoke to Venus' life, they wanted to "tell a story…capable of retrieving what was dormant… a story predicated upon impossibility." (pp.2-3) Hartman sets out to "achieve an impossible goal: redressing the violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse which is as close as we can come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved." (p.3) Hartman's solution to the violence of modernity then, is to turn to literary and archival reconstructions. Hartman asks then, if it is "possible to construct a story from 'the locus of impossible speech' or resurrect lives from the ruins." (p.3) For Hartman, the core issue is that these histories have for the most part been lost to time, lost to the violence of dispossession, abduction and enforced slavery. Hartman thus seeks to invoke and reclaim lost histories questioning "how does one rewrite the chronicle of a death foretold and anticipated, as a collective biography of dead subjects… as the practice of freedom?" (Ibid, p.4) This is not though she notes, "to provide closure where there is none" it is not an exercise in consolation (Ibid, p.8). Rather, Hartman looks to move beyond a purely archival account, which, in its commitment to mundane fact, limits its capacity to enact the practice of freedom.

Hartman (2008) argues then that there is a degree of impossibility in the task of liberatory archiving as it is fundamentally intertwined with the logics of colonial-capitalism. Where the power and violence which necessitates archiving in the first place, and shapes its nature, results in a policing and obfuscation of the realities of Black existence, of Black life. Key to Hartman's answer to this problem is a fundamental reconfiguration of the temporal frames of archiving. Hartman invokes Lisa Lowe's conditional temporalities of "what could have been… a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled and unavailable by its methods." (Lowe, 2006, p.208, as cited by Hartman, 2008, p.11) In this, the histories, the narratives derived from a 'what could have been' challenge and contest the impossibilities which underpin the Black condition while also recognising the material realities and limitations of such a project. They speak to the gaps, the unsaid, imagining what we are incapable of verifying. This methodological reconfiguration of temporalities to write

in the gaps of the archive which Hartman names 'critical fabulation' is developed through "rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view" (Ibid, p.11) What is essential here is that these counter histories rupture the normative assumptions of the archives by introducing different voices, different possibilities, different perceptions, thus Hartman performs "the limits of writing history through the act of narration." (Ibid, p.13) These counter-histories thus distort temporalities and rearrange schemas of perceptibility, offering ways of "naming our time, thinking our present, and envisioning the past which has created it." (Ibid, p.13)

Ultimately though, Hartman (2008) notes that there is no possibility of saving Venus, nor of resuscitating her. Under modernity it "is much too late for the accounts of death to prevent other deaths; and it is much too early for such scenes of death to halt other crimes." (Ibid, p.14). What then, are we called to do, what narratives do we explore "what are the stories one tells in dark times?" (Ibid, p.14) Hartman calls on us to write the impossible, to enact the impossible and hold what cannot be held, bear what cannot be borne. Where writing the impossible "has as its prerequisites the embrace of likely failure and the readiness to accept the ongoing, unfinished and provisional character of this effort." (Ibid, p.14) Writing the impossible then, recognises the prospect of failure in its task, yet invokes the necessity of attempting it as a means of both reconfiguring spatio-temporalities. It takes the form of retellings which draw the pasts into the present and both past and present into the future. In shaping time and space these counter histories and impossible narratives speak to a fundamental reconfiguring of the very metaphysical and epistemological conditions of modernity. These imaginative counter-histories offer a means by which our futures can be reclaimed, our pasts can be rethought, and our presents disrupted. They represent moments of dissensus, ruptures in the order of perceptibility and interpretability (Rancière, 2008).

Beyond Aqua Nullius and a Black Oceania

> New and old ceremonies come in from the ether and invite us to become heretics, make a break with the old and initiate the new. Some ceremonies are violent, and some are invoked to make things right with ourselves and another. (King, 2019, p.205)

I end this thesis as I began then, with a note on ceremony. There is a convergence between Hartman's calls for new, counter histories and critical fabulations, new narratives

(2008) and Hau'ofa's (2008) assertion of the need for rethinking Oceanian collective identities and finding new pasts to remember. Hartman's analysis maps onto Wendt's (1985) demand that Oceania deserves for more than banal reality, more than mundane fact. He asserted that the prospect of an ever growing, vast Oceania, invites infinite possibilities and impossible narratives. Hau'ofa (2008) too, expresses the need for old/new narratives, new histories for Oceania which emphasise the vastness of our oceans, the importance of our relationship to the Pacific to lift up our peoples. This is critically important for Black Oceania in particular as our pasts and histories have been, and are, often overlooked in Oceania. Such that most narratives around human inhabitancy of the Pacific tend to begin with the Polynesian/Lapita migration some 3,000 years ago, erasing the 60,000 years of Pacific occupation by Black Oceanians and our ancestors. As the peoples of Oceania then, we are called to embody our role as custodians of the Pacific Ocean. However, the current order of colonial-capitalism and its adherence to aqua nullius fundamentally opposes and precludes the exercising of this type of relationality. As a foundational principle for the modern international legal order, aqua nullius denies from the outset the possibility of a reconfiguration of our world-system and the possibility of the ocean as a site of being. In this, where the ocean is our ancestor, a primordial worldly being from which we descend and to which we belong, it becomes clear that aqua nullius constitutes the site of a negation of Oceanian being. It is a negation of the prospect of new Oceanian relationalities, of the Pacific oceans shared realities, and regional identity.

The theories engaged throughout this thesis thus demonstrate the realities of the contemporary Pacific context, while offering Oceanian pathways through the legacies of aqua nullius and white supremacy which continue to shape our relations today. The radical Black traditions offer us a language and framing which speaks to a necessary rejection and overthrowing of the world to secure the possibility of life, of being, for Black Oceanian experiences such that the West Papuan struggle for liberation, cannot and will not be realised, let alone acknowledged by modernity as a result of the white supremacist underpinnings of colonial-capitalism. White supremacy and aqua nullius are two logics of colonial-capitalism which have been enforced in the Pacific through extreme violence. They both speak to an onto-epistemic opposition, an unresolvable conflict at the most fundamental metaphysical level of colonial-capitalism. Oceanian opposition to the consequences of this violence thus necessitate that this resistance takes place in the 'beyond-reform' space (Stein et al, 2018).

Here, the analyses of Rancière and the radical Black Feminist traditions help to identify the metaphysical and onto-epistemic legacies of colonial-capitalism in its imposition and continued application of aqua nullius and white supremacist beliefs. They demonstrate that a new Oceania, that West Papuan liberation, can only be built and achieved through the embers and ashes of this world, these logics. That a new Oceania can only be built upon the ruins of colonial-capitalism. They demonstrate that the call to a new Oceania, is a call to a new world, to decolonisation and revolution.

Navigating Indigenous, Oceanian, Black, and French intellectual traditions leaves us in a position which speaks to the necessity of militant struggle. Where Oceanian resistance is called to recognise that diplomatic and international frameworks which operate according to pluralistic, liberal democratic counts, have nothing to offer the prospect of a new Oceania. They offer no way through the violence which structures Oceanian relationalities under colonial-capitalism. The radical Black and radical Black Feminist traditions in particular demonstrating the necessity of a struggle to bring about the end of the world. As was examined in section two, aqua nullius has produced an increasingly hostile and violent Pacific Ocean environment in which the realities of the irrevocable destruction and collapse of ocean ecosystems, the prospect of nuclear war, and the continued use of the ocean as a site of waste dumping, are the horrific consequences of this logic. At the same time, these chapters demonstrate how resistance to aqua nullius, critically fails to address its onto-epistemic nature, its necessity in structuring the modern world-system of colonial-capitalism. It is a world-system which enshrines aqua nullius through its reliance on U.S. military hegemony to ensure peace and the free flow of capital goods across the oceans. As the condition of modernity's function, aqua nullius constantly moves to reinstate and affirm itself in the face of any possible contestation. Under aqua nullius any peaceful, liberal, democratic attempt to navigate the consequences of climate change and militarisation in the Pacific, is condemned to fail from the beginning. It is clear then that the modern international legal sphere functions as a police order to preserve aqua nullius and the interest of capitalism. As such, the only way in which Oceania can come to perform our duty as custodians and protectors of the oceans is by ending the world, by enacting a dissensus and reconfiguring the ontological structures which shape our being. To move towards a new Oceania, we must engage in a militant anti-militarism, an unwillingness to let modernity destroy our oceans.

The radical Black Feminist tradition thus provides first through the role of m/othering and the active reconfiguration of colonial-capitalist relationalities – the invocation of ways of being which hold to the irrational hope of moving towards a new world, through the reproduction of Black ~~being~~ in a world antithetical to it. Secondly, radical Black feminism asserts the importance of literary and aesthetic narratives in reconceptualising lost histories, in finding the absences in our narratives, the gaps, and filling them with a radical hope through counter-histories. This goes beyond négritude in that it recognises these counter-histories are not the means through which colonial-capitalism is overcome. Rather, the radical Black Feminist tradition holds two forms of resistance to the onto-epistemic order of modernity which are key to overthrowing it. That is, it still asserts the importance of revolutionary resistance, of violence and the need to oppose the police orders of colonial-capitalism in all its forms. However, they also speak to the importance of the aesthetic, to literary and artistic pieces in configuring the relationalities necessary to our survival, to relational resistance. It speaks to the importance of practicing, fostering, and developing the relationalities key to bringing forth a new Oceania, an Oceania in which Black being, in which West Papua lives.

Building on Rancière's account of dissensus or politics as that which ruptures the realm of appearances, the police order of colonial-capitalism; radical Black feminisms and Oceanian Indigenous notions of time and space thus provide us with openings, moments in which the onto-epistemic and spatio-temporal orders of modernity are challenged and possibly overturned. Given this the aleatory nature of being and politics, identified in chapter two, the function of a chance permeating all conditions, means that there is a fundamental inability to predict the definite occurrence of political disputes, disagreements, and ruptures. That is, there is no way to know if a disagreement, if a dispute is going to escalate into a more radical revolutionary struggle, or if it is going to fail and be subsumed under modernity's police logics again. Further, there is no way of knowing if politics – if a rupture in the count – has taken place, thus there is an element of fidelity and faith underpinning this account of politics. This though, is not to say that politics occurs devoid or separate from material circumstances. Rather, every time Oceania resists and protests, every time Oceania ruptures the realm of perceptible, the distribution of the sensible, through political actions and art and community, there is the possibility that it might reconfigure the world. Every time Oceania tries to challenge and try to overturn the logics of colonial-capitalist modernity, an element of

the aleatory, of possibility emerges. The possibility that said resistance might spark and sustain a systematic rupture, an end of the world. Every time we resist, chance underpins said resistance and contains within it the possibility for the invocation of a new world.

Consequently, one of the most important tasks we are called to, as Hartman (2008) describes in the 'meanwhile' or the in-between – when we cannot be certain if a political disagreement and dissensus has been staged – is to build, strengthen, and foster the forms of relationality which we mean to bring with us into this new world. That is, we must develop the communities, the theories, the spiritual practices, the art pieces, and the environmental and social relationships which will carry us through moments of rupture. As well as this, we must build alliances. The contemporary growing and reinvigorated Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement represents one situation in which Oceania can build alliances across the Pacific Ocean and with our comrades in Asia and the Americas as we challenge U.S. hegemony. It represents one moment, one site in which the possibility of a dissensus against the logics of aqua nullius might be enacted, ensuring a reconfiguration of modernity's relationship to the ocean. Where, as before, collective calls for broader Oceanian resistance demonstrate a contestation at the heart of ocean relationality we must also be clear though, that if we continue to work through the diplomatic and legal spheres of modernity, this should be done at arm's length. As a part of the police order of modernity, critically structured on aqua nullius and white supremacy, these spheres function to inhibit, obfuscate, and interrupt any and all true moments of politics.

Alongside the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, and the West Papuan struggle for liberation, where both represent sites of immanent struggle and resistance, one of the other ways in which a new Oceania can challenge the police operations imposed on our relationalities is through the enacting of ceremony and Indigenous Oceanian aesthetics. I think one of the ways forward for Oceania as such, is demonstrated in Okusitino Mahina's *'Tā, Vā, and Moana: Temporality, Spatiality, and Indigeneity* (2010) breakdown of Tā – time and Vā – space, in aesthetic and ceremonial pieces to examine how the aesthetic opens spaces for the folding of time. As a part of the Oceanian tradition of ecological time, and our onto-epistemic relationship to time, to the past as that which is held in front of us as we walk through the world opens the possibility for the pasts and futures of Oceania to rupture through the colonial fabrics of modernity's space and time to foster new relationalities. In this respect, ceremony as an aesthetic practice across Oceania involves an invocation in the

present, to the past and future, and provides us with opportunities to experiment with different visions of Oceania. Where it was ancient ceremonies and sea chants, traditional Indigenous rituals which facilitated Mahina and Helu's, reading these knowledges in our environments, and inviting them to the forefront of our imaginations as we come to better understood Oceania's history. Ceremonies ultimately propose a reconfiguration of spatio-temporal framings in a similar manner to Hartman (2008) where the need to transcend temporal bounds to invoke lost and hidden pasts is asserted to protect our futures and diagnose our presents.

Ceremonies are thus performed, enacted instances of writing the impossible and the drawing together of pasts, presents, and futures, through a schema of perceptibility and appearance. Here then as well, King (2019) drawing on Sylvia Winter's 'The Ceremony Must Be Found' provides a closing note on the importance of ceremony in transfiguring the spatio-temporal knots of colonial-capitalism which render Black ~~being~~ unintelligible. Ceremony is appealed to as a "heretical epistemic revolution." (King, 2019, p.198) Where ceremony "unsettles the body, Western epistemologies, and notions of time and space." (King, 2019, p.204). In this though, not all ceremony contains these radical possibilities, there are normative ceremonies enacted through our lives, which do not function in this manner. Rather, the important task, is to invoke and search for ceremony which ruptures. To find and enact ceremony in community which surrenders one's body to chaos, to disruption. Such that chaos, the disordering of spatio-temporalities in ceremony "allows us to enter the Lordean space of erotic possibilities, where bodies transfer experiences and come into contact with the sacred together." (2019, p.204). Thus, for King, new spaces "forged through ceremony, created a shoal where the grammars of decolonization and abolition came together and uttered a possibility of doing humanity off the shores of the mandates of conquest." (2019, p.205). What this guides us to is interconnected and resurgent ceremonies, as processes we repeat, again and again, to invoke and invite, as we being to move together again. Retellings of histories through bodies coming together. In this, ceremonies invite moments of rupture in the spatio-temporal police order, moments in which the logics that divide us from each other are suspended.

They are moments of dissensus, ruptures with the onto-epistemic frames of modernity and its police operations which normatively function to deny and oppose Oceanian agency. In a similar manner, Karin Ingersoll's (2016) '*Waves of Knowing: Seascape Epistemologies*'

contends that Oceanic literacy, an epistemic framework for knowing the waves and the seas, to be able to 'read' them, embodies precisely the moments of dissensus and rupture that Rancière appeals to. Such that "Rancière's concept of the 'distribution [partition] of the perceptible' illuminates the potential that oceanic literacy has to make Kānaka voices audible by expanding the horizon of the 'sayable'" (Ingersoll, 2016, p.92). To this end, when Kānaka Maoli surf, they are enacting a dissensus, the Kānaka surfer "becomes more than merely a body riding a wave; she can also become political through the sensibility of the act that represents a historical way of knowing" (Ibid, p.92). What is important here is that, across Oceania and within Indigenous communities around the world, there are moments of politics, expressions of dissensus anchored in our relationalities, our ceremonies, which seek to rupture and break the police operations of colonial-capitalism and the violence it invokes. Decolonisation and revolution across the Pacific are necessary conditions for the assertion of a new Oceania. Through ceremony, art, activism, ritual, and play, moments of dissensus and ruptures in colonial-capitalism – in the world order, Oceania tears at the very ontological and epistemological foundations of modernity and beckons to new world, a morning star to come.

All this is to say that we must accept that to call forth a new Oceania, to free West Papua, and to save our oceans, is at its most fundamental to call for the end of the world. A new Oceania is therefore best understood as the proper name for decolonisation in the Pacific. In its multiplicity Oceania is peaceful in that it calls for the end of U.S. militarisation. Oceania is revolutionary in that it refuses to sit quiet while West Papua is occupied. Oceania is weakened when it can only see its strategic value. Oceania is strong when it stands and moves together. Oceania is Black in its global struggle against white supremacy. Oceania is refusing to accept the destruction of our oceans. Oceania is understanding that the ocean is our ancestor, it is that to which we belong. To move towards a new Oceania, to move beyond this world, we are called to build the relationships, to hold the ceremonies and spaces and invoke the systems and structures which will carry us collectively into our role as custodians of the ocean, as the peoples of our great sea of islands. A new Oceania is the horizon to which our liberation, our resistance, our love, our joy is directed. It is our hope, our metaphor, our guide through the night.

Conclusion: The Black Horizons of a new Oceania

Oa Malara

This thesis has examined two logics of onto-epistemic violence: aqua nullius, and white supremacy which colonial-capitalism wields to deny the existence of Oceania as a collective identity. As barriers to the prospect of a new Oceania, these logics police the possibility of Oceanian liberation, constituting what Oceania is not. To do this, this thesis has appealed to the metaphor of the Morning Star as a means of organising its analyses, and threading the different theories it engages together. Through its three iterations, Oa Malara, Venus, and Koreri, Morning Star invokes three different relational structures and approaches which have developed this analysis.

In the first instance, Oa Malara comes to signify my particular relationship to this thesis as its author. Where Oa Malara, as the name my village gives to Morning Star as ancestor and guide, as a signifier for my relationality, opened a space for me to provide an account of this thesis' organising frameworks of Indigenous relationality and the importance of being in good relation (Wilson, 2008). With this in mind, in chapter one 'Anchoring Ceremonies,' as part of the anchoring ceremony guiding this analysis and the need to be in good relation, I examined my historical and personal relationships to water and my experiences as Melanesian diaspora in Aotearoa. This was done to demonstrate the ways in which, even had I not decided to write this thesis, these relationships have, and continue to shape my experience. Drawing on my time as an academic mentor for Māori and Pacific students, and as a graduate teaching-assistant in sociology as well, the account of Oa Malara allowed me to examine my role as a translator in the academy. In this, through my work and my studies, I showed how I stepped into the role as a translator, as one who weaves together theories to try and make sense of the world.

I assert that this translating, however, has not been an act devoid of political intent. Instead, as an activist first and academic second, my approach to the work of translating and experimenting with theory has always been underpinned by a didactic desire to change and challenge the world. To not simply interpret it but change it. As such, I have aimed to translate and teach with the explicit hopes of sustaining radical traditions of Oceanian thought which sought to challenge and overturn the colonial-capitalist order of the world. In this, I make no effort to hide that this thesis, and my work in general is shaped by an axiomatic

unwillingness to accept modernity and its logics as the only way of organising the world. This thesis holds a commitment to Black Marxism and frameworks of decolonisation which look to overthrow our current world-system. As well as an overarching commitment to Hau'ofa (2008) and the project for a new Oceania.

As an account of my philosophical influences, Oa Malara facilitates an analysis of the white ancestors I get to choose, or rather the white ancestors I bring with me through this thesis. In chapter two, drawing on Teaiwa (2014), hooks (1994), and Ahenakew (2016), and the values that they see in utilising theory within Black and Indigenous contexts, I framed my use of critical theory, and in particular, the role that Rancière has played in my activism and political experiments. To explore the analyses of Rancière, I first provided an exposition of Althusser's (2006) account of aleatory materialism. To this end, Althusser asserts the existence of a material tradition underpinning much of western philosophy which is implicitly committed to a recognition of pure chance – the aleatory encounter, as an inherent aspect of existence. Where this chance contains the capacity to rupture and disrupt any assertion of an order, or count. Further, as an instance of pure chance, a rupture or an encounter is not only unpredictable, but also unable to be accounted for. That is, the occurrence of an encounter and its consequences cannot be known, only gestured to through an act of faith, or fidelity, which holds to the reality of its occurrence. This element of chance being critical to any project that endeavours to change the world, to invoke a new Oceania.

Through Rancière, this thesis examined the core concepts of politics, policing, and dissensus which informs the critiques of colonial-capitalism, pluralistic liberal democracy, and its international and domestic diplomatic frameworks. Where Rancière characterises these systems as part of the police operation, or order of power under modernity. In this, the police order operates to maintain the smooth administration of the state and deny the prospect of a disagreement with its order. A police operation thus enacts a principle of counting and ordering the multiplicity of the demos or people, which attempts to ascribe each body to its appropriate place. This operation of counting and ordering is by its very nature, always a miscount. This being grounded in the reality that the multiplicity which constitutes the people, the demos, is fundamentally defined by its absence of a criteria for counting, for participating in the order of the world. To acknowledge this miscount and the falsity of counting in general would be to undermine the nature of the colonial-capitalist order of the world and its administration which the police order maintains. Consequently, the

contemporary order of colonial-capitalism, weaponises the modern schemas of international law and human rights to secure its order, and obscure the prospect of disagreement. This is particularly achieved through the enforcing of partitions in the perceptible, in which the police render certain bodies and collectives within an order invisible and uncountable.

In this respect, Rancière defines politics as the active challenging of the order and count of colonial-capitalism. Where politics is the staging of a disagreement with the nature of the world's system of ordering. It is the enacting of a dissensus, a rupturing of the order of sensibility, which challenges the very logic of counting in the first place. It is not the staging of a disagreement in the hopes that those who are uncounted or miscounted will in turn be included in the count. Rather, politics consists in the active move to break and overcome the count, it is the overturning of the logic of counting in general. The staking of a claim of counting by a part of the population whose inclusion in the count unravels its very logic and order. It is precisely in this staking of a claim to count that an element of the aleatory has the capacity to rupture and break the police order. Where the demos – the name of the people as a collective who has no right to participate in the political, enacts a claim to the political which it does not have. The demos is thus the name of those for whom there is no criteria by which they would exercise the right to count and rule, but who exercise that right anyways.

The police operation of colonial-capitalism responds to the stating of possible disagreements by reconfiguring and reinterpreting these claims as mere expressions of *phonê*, animalistic expressions of pain and pleasure, of desires. *Phonê* is thus opposed to *logos*, where *logos* reflects the expression of reason and thought, the expression of speech, logic, and rational dispute. Colonial-capitalism maintains its order through police operations which serve to partition the perceptible and reinterpret these expressions of disagreement as expressions of *phonê*. Rancière particularly demonstrates how a police operation functions in the schema of universal human rights and international legal conventions to preventing the possibility of a disagreement their order, and justifying certain types of exceptional military interventions to secure these rights. As part of an account of myself, my beliefs and relations as the author, chapter two thus established the philosophical groundings in western critical theory which informed and shaped the analyses of this thesis. It highlights why and how theory is applied throughout this thesis, as well as the importance of the definitions of politics, policing, and dissensus. Further, it draws on Rancière's recognition of the

importance of both the aleatory in rupturing and producing moments of politics, and the role of international and domestic legal frameworks in policing these disagreements.

I turned to present a close reading of Hau'ofa, whose idea of Oceania and a new Oceania guides this thesis. This reading sought to locate his account of Oceania within broader historical trends which were unfolding around the world. In this, I aimed to substantiate and demonstrate what I perceived as the more radical kernels within Hau'ofa's thought and the call to a new Oceania. To do this, I introduced the frameworks of Stein et al.'s (2017) 'House of Modernity' and Wallerstein's (1974) World-systems theory to help identify the stakes of Hau'ofa's analyses including the nature of modernity in which this thesis looks to apply his arguments. What was shown to be central to Hau'ofa's project was the need to reconceptualise the identities which have been imposed on the Pacific by external colonial powers. In particular, recognising that the modern world could only conceptualise the Pacific in relation to its vast oceans, small islands, and cultural diversity, Hau'ofa sought to develop new forms of collectively identifying ourselves, which they signalled under the name Oceania.

Through earlier essays, while navigating the realities of neocolonialism and the rise of neoliberalism in the Pacific, Hau'ofa asserted the necessity of rethinking collective Pacific identities. In particular, in *Anthropology and Pacific Islanders*, Hau'ofa identified the ways in which anthropology and certain fields of Pacific exploration and investigation served to reinforce narratives of smallness, irreconcilable difference, and separation to undermine Pacific notions of self. This was further reinforced in the essay *The New South Pacific Society* and Hau'ofa's examination of the development of a regional economic identity which, through neoliberalism and neocolonialism developed in the Pacific in the latter half of the 20th century. An identity which imposed collective and national Pacific identities which failed to account for Oceania in its totality, which recognised and wielded difference to secure the interests of capitalist exploitation. An identity which Oceania was not. Key to this was the erasure of difference via the development of a new South Pacific society in the Pacific which was grounded in colonial-capitalist relationalities. In this, the hegemonic cultural, political, and economic tendencies of colonial-capitalism have come to pervade the Pacific and Oceania relations. Such that, through framings of too much diversity, framings of difference and space which divided the Pacific, through the capital relation which imposed new forms of

economic relationality, colonial-capitalism has imposed identities of smallness on the Pacific which inhibit its capacity to move beyond its.

Having articulated the importance of rethinking collective Pacific identities, Hau'ofa appealed to and expanded the Oceanian tradition through 'Project New Oceania.' Across the three essays which comprise 'Project New Oceania' this thesis examined Hau'ofa key beliefs and frameworks in the struggle for a new Oceania, a new way of collectively realising Oceania as a regional identity. This first took the form of their seminal essay *Our Sea of Islands*, where Hau'ofa suggested and established the framework for new Oceanian relations. Here Hau'ofa built on previous arguments for the persistence of a regional economy and what they saw as global perceptions of Pacific smallness. It in this piece that Hau'ofa, presented the concept of Oceania as a collective, regional identity to facilitate the development of counter narratives for the Pacific which contested colonial conceptualisations of the Pacific's smallness and difference. Through this regional, collective way of understanding ourselves, Hau'ofa articulates a version of Oceania which ruptures the colonial-capitalist logics of modernity's world-system.

To examine the prospect of a new Oceania, Hau'ofa introduced the concept of Oceania across three temporalities. In the first instance, Hau'ofa articulated the existence of an historical Oceania, grounded in the forms of collective relationality which characterised the Pacific prior to colonisation is examined. Second, Hau'ofa maintains that today, forms of Oceanian identity persisted through the ways in which the Pacific enacts its collective realities. Through the Pacific's unwillingness to accept the divisions between our islands imposed by colonial-capitalism, through the Pacific's inherent collectively a form of Oceania persists against modernity's violence, using what it can to enact its collective nature. Third, in the prospect of a new Oceania, a future Oceania to come – a decolonial Oceania which is opposed to and overcomes colonial-capitalism, Hau'ofa explored the need for new and old Oceanian relationalities to reinvigorate collective Oceanian identities. In particular, through the essay '*The Ocean in Us*' Hau'ofa asserted the importance of developing philosophical and theoretical frameworks of unity and collectively grounded in Oceania's relation to the ocean. Central to this is Hau'ofa's assertion that one of the key roles Oceanians and a new Oceania are called to enact is as the custodians and guardians of the Pacific Ocean as our ancestor and relative. In this, the sea, as Oceania's greatest metaphor, as Oceania's shared ancestor, as that which links Oceania's islands and peoples together, was articulated and

defended as a framework for thinking decolonisation and liberation across the Pacific. Hau'ofa introduced this metaphor with the hopes of overcoming limited notions of collective identities within the Pacific which, rather than speaking to Oceanian collectivity, reflected the interests of colonial-capitalism. In this metaphor, in this possible way of relating to each other collectively through relationship to the ocean, Hau'ofa reaffirms the call to new Oceania, a future Oceania to come which properly enacts and reflects the reality of Oceania's collective identity and strength.

This collective identity anchored in Oceania's relationship to the sea, was further reinforced through Hau'ofa's *Pasts to Remember* which examined the importance of historical narrative and frameworks for rethinking Pacific identities. In this essay, Hau'ofa introduced the importance of Oceanian rethinking of narratives and spatio-temporal understandings of ourselves. This was established on the belief that many of the ideas surrounding Pacific knowledges, identities, and histories serve to reinforce notions of smallness and difference. Hau'ofa thus calls upon the Pacific to rethink and broaden its understandings of its history and senses of self which have often only been constructed in relation to legacies of colonisation and occupation. Part of this has been the overemphasis of written histories and the eurocentrism of this method which relegates Oceania's actual pasts to an absent space of 'pre-history.' Against this, Hau'ofa interrogates the work of Oceanian scholars such as Futa Helus and 'Okusitino Mahina, who have both sought to undermine colonial-capitalist temporalities through their framings of ecological time, rethinking the links between ancient histories and the Pacific's ecological and environmental cues which inform our understanding of ourselves.

Ultimately, through these essays and account of Hau'ofa, this thesis articulated the fundamental importance of challenging the disparate identities imposed on the Pacific through colonisation and reinforced and adopted via colonial capitalism. To overcome these belittling narratives and legacies, Hau'ofa appealed to the prospect of a new Oceania as the possibility of reconfiguring collective identities and relationalities of the Pacific. This being done to articulate a path through the violences these narratives secured, towards a new, collective way for the Pacific to understand ourselves. A new Oceania was shown to challenge the spatio-temporal order of colonial-capitalism, first, in its recognition of a world, a space, outside of its logics and second in reconfiguring its temporal framings. In this I assert that a new Oceania is the project of decolonisation in the Pacific. It invites the need for a new

world, for new ways in which the Pacific can organise and relate to each other. Thus, Oceania's reality as custodians and guardians of the Pacific Ocean, as a regional collective linked through shared histories and relationships to the ocean calls the Pacific to come together to face the challenges that the future may hold. In this though, it recognises that this collectivity encounters onto-epistemic barriers, police operations, which function under colonial-capitalist to prevent any movement or attempt to collectively organise Oceania.

Venus

To this end, this thesis appealed to the metaphor and image of Venus, as signifying a particular form of relationship to the ocean and seas which actively polices the possibility of a new Oceania. Venus thus came to represent the hegemonic logic of aqua nullius which renders the oceans a negative ontological space, it denied the possibility of the ocean as a world, as a site of being. Aqua nullius was shown to be an inherent condition in the maintaining the current order as well as fundamentally opposed to Hau'ofa's assertion of the ocean as ancestor and world of Oceania. To demonstrate and interrogate the nature of aqua nullius as part of an onto-epistemic order of colonial-capitalism, this thesis sought to trace the ways in which it became embedded within the modern world-system as logic. In chapter three 'Tracing Aqua Nullius' this thesis demonstrated how the Doctrine of Discovery through papal authority, defined international relations in 16th century Europe, established the basis for colonial projects. As England grew in power, eventually breaking with papal authority via the reformation, the English reinterpretation of the doctrine in an attempt to legitimate their colonial endeavours, fundamentally reconfigured the logics of colonialism. In particular, by adding the caveat of occupation as a necessary prerequisite to the claim of discovery, England reified the role of military and naval might – the capacity of occupy a territory – as the basis for international law. England thus wielded their power and eventual naval hegemony to shape colonial-capitalism in their interests.

Drawing on Campling and Colas (2019), chapter three demonstrated how the modern international order under U.S. hegemony developed out of the Pax Brittanica. Where the Pax Brittanica was developed out of the principles of 'command of the sea' and the need to colonial-capitalism to exploit the oceans extra-legal nature. In the aftermath of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. through military dominance, established their command of the sea and wrested the position of hegemon of colonial-

capitalism from the British Empire. The international order of colonial-capitalism which developed out of this period, exemplified in legal conventions such as UNCLOS and under U.S. pressure, was shown to function as part of a police order which rendered the ocean a free and empty commons. In doing so, this international order negates and obscures the possibility of recognising the ocean as an intrinsic part of Oceanian being, as a world to which Oceania belongs. It denies the possibility of a disagreement with the onto-epistemic order of the world and the violence which organises it. This being demonstrated in UNCLOS asserting that the ocean outside of EEZ's remained open to military presence, this ensuring the flow of capital and 'peace' through the threat of U.S. intervention to protect its interests. Further, chapter three examined how though challenges to U.S. hegemony and command of the sea have arisen, it has become increasingly clear that international diplomatic and legal frameworks function are wielded by a police order which obscures Oceanian claims to the ocean as a site of being, as the shared ancestor of the Pacific. As such, these frameworks were shown to reinterpret onto-epistemic challenges to colonial-capitalism's order. Where more radical challenges in the form of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement for example, were reframed through the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty as individual nation-state disputes. Concluding that this establishes a need for Oceania to look beyond the onto-epistemic order of the world and its international legal frameworks which serve to reinforce aqua nullius.

Having defined and established aqua nullius as a key part of the onto-epistemic order of colonial-capitalism, chapter four demonstrated the material reality of aqua nullius and its occurring and impending consequences for the world's oceans. In the first instance, this was approached from a global perspective, where, drawing on my own experiences at COP25, this chapter examined both important lessons but also frustrations encountered within these frameworks. First and foremost, this came in the form of spending time in this space with Indigenous climate activists across all age groups who recognised the need for collective resistance and learning the importance of global relational struggles. However, another key lessons which came from this time was in the form of the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. Through this report, a material account of the realities and impending consequences of aqua nullius on a global scale were demonstrated. Where an analysis of the implications of these changes on the general health of the ocean and its ecosystems, was also linked to what this would mean for the Pacific Ocean. It then examined

how the formal mechanisms of international climate change action either actively enact aqua nullius through police operations, or struggle to navigate it as an implicit logic in their attempts to combat climate change.

Chapter four further provided an explicit account of the realities and consequences of aqua nullius in Oceania as a collective today. This was done by examining how command of the sea as a key marker of global hegemony resulted in the Pacific Ocean being treated as a site of conflict. Where the U.S. reinforcing its hegemony against a potential challenge for control with China, continues to rapidly militarise the Pacific region. This being exemplified in the recent AUKUS treaty, and the signing of pacts and agreements around the Pacific. The consequences of this militarisation and its potential fallout were shown to constitute an urgent and material threat to the prospect of future Oceania's. Where, while resistance has and is occurring against aqua nullius and this world, the possibility of disagreement or a challenge to the order which renders the ocean aqua nullius faces a police order which wields legal and diplomatic institutions as well as outright violence to maintain the interests of colonial-capitalism and U.S. hegemony. A point further exemplified in the issues of waste disposal under colonial-capitalism where the Marshall Islands' concrete dome, and the Great Pacific Garbage Patches were shown to be established through a logic of aqua nullius, which treats the oceans as an empty commons in which it can dispose of its excess. Similarly, as a consequence of frameworks such as UNCLOS, the prospect of a treaty on the issue and its drafts were shown to reinforce aqua nullius and its logics once again. All this was to demonstrate two things, the first was that the current order and its international frameworks offer us no real solution to its violence and consequences, instead only ever working to reinforce its power. The second, was to assert that on a fundamental level any world or system which is established on aqua nullius is not and cannot be a part of Oceania. Aqua nullius is antithetical to a new Oceania.

Koreri

Continuing to interrogate what Oceania was not and guided by the Morning Star and the West Papuan struggle for liberation, section three, Koreri, interrogated the realities and legacies of a white supremacist colonial-capitalist system which is ontologically and metaphysically structured on Black oppression. It examined the world of Black Oceania, the legacies, and systems of racialised violence which ascribe to the Black Oceanian body fears

of ontological death, terror, and negation. This was done by reiterating the importance of holding and navigating difference to move together collectively as Oceania and raising the question of a site of difference missing in Hau'ofa's analysis. Where the conditions of Black Oceanian ~~being~~ and the barriers Black Oceania face constituted a gap in Hau'ofa's project. To this end, chapter five examined presented the argument for an analysis of Black Oceania in general and through the West Papuan struggle for liberation. In doing so, it demonstrated the ways in which the world's colonial-capitalist system necessitates the violent oppression and genocide of West Papua as part of its order of economic and environmental exploitation for profit. At the same time, it demonstrated the ways in which West Papua and Black Oceanian resistance has taken place and linked struggles across the world in the hopes of garnering solidarity, and the ways in which Indonesia and the world has responded to West Papuan struggles calls for freedom. Highlighting the legacies of Black solidarity that historically shaped these struggles. Chapter five examined the white supremacist nature of the Indonesian occupation of West Papua, resulted in a situation where ontological and social death has come to characterise Black Oceania's existence within the white conscience as its rationalises and eases away the guilt of its violence. Concluding that the white supremacist nature of colonial-capitalism rendered it irreconcilable with a new Oceania.

In chapter six, this thesis looked to the radical Black tradition and its responses to the white supremacist violence of colonial-capitalism as possible solutions within the Oceanian context. In this it first explored the negritude movement and the ways in which it sought to contest the ontological violence of colonial-capitalist values through an appeal to Black culture and values, through the assertion of a different schema of value. Where historically, négritude was used in Melanesian resistance. However, while critical within its time and space, negritude was at times limited in its applicability. Glissant for example, encountered limitations in the applicability of négritude within the Martinican context. Fanon as well offered a critique of négritude and appeals to national cultures alone, on the basis of the irrational nature of white supremacy and its unwillingness to perceive Black being. In this, Fanon proposes the necessity of actual struggle, of violent confrontation with the operations of power, with its police order. This being key to the struggle for liberation and overturning the oppressive order. Here, Fanon (1963) in particular, faced with an irrational white supremacist order demonstrated the need for decolonisation to not only assert one's values against the world, but also to actually enact one's existence and demand something more, to

demand a new world, new relations grounded in different values. If there is a role for the native intellectual, Fanon asserts it is in fostering a national-consciousness, in building the collective relations that will strengthen the resistance.

The need for the end of this world and its order as a result of this ontological violence was further reiterated by Warren (2018), Wilderson (2020), and Gillespie (2017) whose frameworks demonstrate the ontological and metaphysical violence of colonial-capitalism, the ways in which through legal and spatio-temporal orders the very nature of the world is conditioned on black ontological death. On the terror represented in Black ~~being~~ and its consequences. In particular, Gillespie (2017), confronted with the modern police state and its operations, demonstrated the role of leaning into the absurd reality of this ontological death and weaponising it. Chapter six finished with a reflection on the degree to which these analyses map onto and explain Black Oceanian contexts. Acknowledging both the need for a new world and the ways in which the legal, onto-epistemic, and metaphysical structures of colonial-capitalism function to prevent and deny this possibility. However, this chapter also recognised that in some ways, the absurdist and nihilistic responses to ontological death, struggled to make sense within Oceanian relational frameworks.

Chapter seven building on the historically interwoven legacies of Black Feminist movements in the Pacific considered how Black Feminist responses to the question of ontological death can help make sense of the Black Oceanian context, and how it offers ways through and around the struggle of Black ~~being~~ which better reflect Oceanian relational obligations. This being particularly exemplified through Black m/othering and the outright refusal of the seemingly inescapable conclusions of the afro-pessimist and black nihilist analyses. Where Black m/othering adopts an equally absurd response in the face of ontological terror and death, and chooses to live, and to love, to continue. Black m/othering as the perpetuation of Black life, knows and accepts the realities of ontological violence and death more than anyone. However, in the face of that reality, Black m/othering is the refusal to accept defeat, to continue even without hope, to love and perpetuate Black life.

Further, in a similar manner to Hau'ofa's call for reclaiming and remembering our pasts, Hartman offered a response to the loss of culture and history which Black Oceania faces through an account of the radical importance of exploring counter histories and counter narratives which challenge the impossibilities and invisibilities of Black life. In particular,

Hartman highlighted the radical capacity of counter histories to distort spatio-temporal orderings, to do the impossible tasks of recovering lost histories, lost philosophies. Where the gesture to them facilitates a surpassing of the spatio-temporal structures of colonial-capitalism. Counter histories and critical fabulations allow perception beyond the limits of modernity, to the possibilities, and the importance of ever different worlds. Facilitating a reclaiming of Black Oceanian futures by rethinking and interpreting lost Black Oceanian pasts. Hartman outlines the necessity of rejecting the spatio-temporal confines of colonial-capitalism, particularly in the articulation of new histories and pasts. Through both Black m/othering and Hartman's account of counter-histories and critical fabulations, Black Feminist traditions demonstrated the importance of choosing to reject the nihilism of the Black ontological condition, to choose to reject the impossibility of the tasks ahead and continue to persist, to struggle against the world in the face of hopelessness.

Lastly, emphasising the importance of relationality and the rejection of impossibilities enacted by the Black Feminist traditions, this thesis finished with a reflection on the role of heretical ceremony in breaking spatio-temporal bounds, allowing for pasts, presents, and futures to intertwine and bring bodies together. Such that ceremonies hold the capacity to enact dissensus, to rupture schemas of perceptibility and, in Oceania, link us with our ancestors and elders. As sites of the collapsing of space and time, ceremonies offer ways of reestablishing and securing our collective relationalities. In recalling and reconnecting with ancestors, both past and future, ceremony imagines ways through the realities of ontological death helping Oceania to invoke, imagine, and call to new worlds, new relations to overcome and transcend the violence of colonial-capitalism.

This thesis concluded by asserting that the struggle for a new Oceania is fundamentally established on the onto-epistemic and metaphysical necessity of abandoning colonial-capitalism. As a world-system established on the logics of aqua nullius, which denied water its capacity as a site of being, and white supremacy, which denied Black Oceana its reality as a being, colonial-capitalism proves itself to be incompatible with any project for a new Oceania. Thus, where Hau'ofa maintains that a new Oceania must navigate its differences and multiplicities to unite us, that Oceania must lean into its role as custodian of the Pacific Ocean, recognising the ocean as binding rather than separating us, colonial-capitalism has been shown to be its opposite. In this, while Oceania exists in multiplicities and cannot be encapsulated in a singular definition or frame, while Oceania is vast, this thesis

proposes to claim at least two logics of colonial-capitalism, aqua nullius and white supremacy render it antithetical to the project of a new Oceania.

Limitations & Horizons

This thesis has also encountered limitations, and gaps, areas where more research and different voices could and should be prioritised. First and foremost, this comes in an acknowledgment of my positionality as a diasporic son of Papua New Guinea, raised in Auckland, New Zealand. In this, my experience has been privileged in comparison to the realities of the lives of my family in Papua New Guinea, the lives of wantoks across West Papua and Oceania. While I am committed to using this privilege to engage in the struggle for change and a better world, the fact remains that this privilege shapes and frames my analyses. It is a privileged position to be able to walk between worlds, to experiment with theories in opposing colonial-capitalism. In being able to delve into theory and dream of new worlds and what they might be, I hope to also be able to translate the ideas developed in this thesis outside of the academy. As an activist first, I have engaged theories here in part because they are ideas which have both helped me make sense of the and understand the world. Through understanding the limits of the current world-system, and the ways it enforces its violence, I have also engaged the theories throughout this thesis in the hope that they might motivate reflections on what it might take to try and move beyond this world. They are ideas I have developed with family, friends, teachers and students, comrades, and allies, artists, and activists in the hopes of trying to push the limits of what a new Oceania could be.

However, I also recognise, examining relationships to water and Blackness in Oceania, that I can only approach this with my own relationships to water and Blackness, my own philosophical and theoretical biases, but also in my position as a man, a son of Papua New Guinea. In this, while I hope to have helped foster discussions between the different theoretical traditions engaged here, this can only be one part of the ever growing conversations and alliances needed to move towards a new Oceania. As a vast and ever growing project, a new Oceania holds the hope and possibility of a world, a way of relating to each other and the oceans. It needs more than one attempt to articulate its reality and possibility. In this, I want to acknowledge that the relationships of water and blackness to the feminine and the fluid, have much vaster and more complex understandings of and

relationships to water. Relationships that I cannot and have not presumed to be able to speak on. This is one of the key limitations of this thesis, as well as areas in which I think further queer, feminine, and fluid analyses of the onto-epistemic violences of colonial-capitalism in Oceania would offer important reflections on the struggle for a new Oceania. Where a Black Oceanian queering of this project, an account of queer narratives, transgressive resistances and opposition to oppressive normative relations in the Pacific, are critical to providing better relational frameworks for understanding, rupturing, and overcoming the patriarchal, cisgendered, and heteronormative barriers to a new Oceania which function to deny Oceania its multiplicity and difference.

I also want to acknowledge that the analysis of aqua nullius in this thesis in particular reflected a more positivist and empirical approach, emphasising science and law and focusing on how they reflected the consequences of colonial-capitalism in the Pacific This neglected the important spiritual and sacred aspects of both Oceanian water relationality in resistance, and the spiritual violence of aqua nullius. Relationalities which I think different Oceanian perspectives could be better suited to reflect on and examine, and areas I hope future research might engage. In aqua nullius I also want to acknowledge that there are limitations in that many of the situations researched are currently unfolding. Such that, some aspects of agreements and deals are yet to be unveiled and are part of an active contestation, with the geopolitical environment changing sometimes daily. In this respect, if there are gaps or areas where the accounts of militarisation in Oceania could have developed its account of aqua nullius further, these analyses were developed in reflection to an at times rapidly changing situation.

Further, while this thesis was concerned with aqua nullius and its relationship to saltwater specifically as a part of Hau'ofa's conceptualisation of a new Oceania. I think there is a case to be made for the persistence of the logics of aqua nullius in the case of fresh and frozen water, where the interests of colonial-capitalism continue to deny it its value as an ontological site of being. In this respect, an investigation into aqua nullius in general, across fresh, frozen, and saltwater and how colonial-capitalism imposes these logics would be valuable. Examples such as Indigenous freshwater resistance in North America against the Dakota Access Pipeline, as well as the Flint and Hawaiian water crises all speak to ways in which aqua nullius and colonial-capitalist conceptualisations logics of violence have consequences on Black, Oceanian, and Indigenous communities. They gesture to the

possibility of an onto-epistemic conflict over the very way in which water is conceptualised by colonial capitalism. A project looking at aqua nullius in its totality, across fresh, frozen, and saltwater and across global spheres of resistance, could thus prove useful in the struggle for a new Oceania, examining the ways in which aqua nullius functions to shape water relations under colonial-capitalism.

Despite these limitations and gaps, this thesis hopes that it will provoke more conversations and connections between Black Oceanian and radical Black traditions in the struggles for a new world, a new Oceania. This thesis thus contributes to the tradition of Oceanian thought and the struggle for collective Oceania by outlining two barriers, the logics of aqua nullius, and white supremacy which function to inhibit and prevent the realisation of a new Oceania. It defines and demonstrates the persistence of aqua nullius as the hegemonic water relation of colonial-capitalism and shows how disagreement with this relation is policed by the law. It further examines the ontological condition of Black Oceania and the persistence of white supremacist logics in the Pacific and the world which facilitate the genocide in West Papua, policing the capacity for West Papua to dispute its treatment, and denying Black Oceanian ontological reality. It finished by offering solutions to the ontological violence of modernity through turning to radical Black, Black Feminist, and Oceanian theories to conceptualise ways of challenging and overthrowing the world.

This thesis has thus demonstrated the fundamental necessity of overcoming aqua nullius and white supremacy, of overcoming the world of colonial-capitalism and fighting for a new world, a truly new Oceania, an Oceania for all of us. An Oceania, which in its vastness and difference, in its relationships to the sea and to Black life, can hold us in all our multiplicity. At its heart, this thesis is about refusing to let the dream of a new Oceania be limited by the realities of our world today. It recognises the important struggles which have gone before in trying to invoke a new Oceania, and beckons towards a better future for our people.

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