DOI 10.17953/aicrj.46.1.san-nicolas

# From a Pacific Daughter: Haunani-Kay Trask's Legacy for Indigenous Pacific Feminisms

*Ha'åni Lucia Falo San Nicolas*
*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

On July 3, 2021, Kānaka Maoli, the Indigenous people of the Hawaiian Islands, mourned the loss of Haunani-Kay Trask, one of the most influential figures in the contemporary Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Trask is a strong example of a *mana wahine*, the embodiment of female *mana* (supernatural or divine power, energy or authority) made evident through her dynamic roles as a scholar, activist, *kumu* (teacher), film director, author, creative writer, sister, friend, and more. She challenged the status quo of American occupation, colonialism, and imperialism by speaking out against the powers that be, vocalizing thoughts deemed too radical for the time, and giving life to a blooming consciousness of resistance. In what is likely her most recognized speech during the centennial of the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i at 'Iolani Palace in 1993, Trask reminded her people, "We are not American. Say it in your heart. Say it when you sleep. We are not American. We will die as Hawaiians. We will never be Americans."[1]

Though widely known for her political activism and her contributions to Kānaka Maoli nationalism and Indigenous sovereignty, Trask was an established poet and essayist, writing timeless pieces that continue to be celebrated today. During the Hawaiian renaissance, a period of cultural reclamation and language revitalization, she implored her *lāhui* (nation) to remember that Indigenous people cannot just

Ha'åni Lucia Falo San Nicolas is a CHamoru and Samoan poet, scholar, educator, and activist from the Island of Guåhan. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in Indigenous politics along with an advanced graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As a graduate assistant for the Department of Political Science, Ha'åni instructs undergraduate courses such as Introduction to Indigenous Politics and Hawai'i Politics.

be cultural because Indigenous culture is always political. Trask viewed her poetry and prose as both artistic and political, rooted in the places, beliefs, and histories of Kānaka Maoli, thus marking creative expression as a tool of recreation and decolonization. She reminds us that "writing, like all human creativity, is by nature political, particularly because the best writing is certainly political."[2]

This special edition of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* commemorates Trask's expansive legacy and celebrates the thirtieth publication anniversary of *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, a book that continues to shape the minds of emerging students and leaders. From critiquing the ornamental cooptation of Kānaka Maoli culture to challenging Asian settler colonialism in Hawai'i, Trask gifts her *lāhui* and the rest of the world with pearls of knowledge so abundant, they can be strung together as a "rope of resistance" in fighting for liberation.[3] Unfortunately, I never had the honor of meeting the incomparable Haunani-Kay Trask face to face. However, I respectfully call her *kumu* because every poem she has penned and every word she has spoken has formed a permanent and resistant home in me—a CHamoru and Samoan woman, a fellow Native daughter. She leaves behind a most defiant genealogy of Kānaka Maoli scholars, activists, dreamers, and *wāhine* (women), along with constellations of Indigenous Pacific women who sustain and lead the fight for decolonization and understand that our "liberation does not come all at once."[4]

This paper explores three ways in which Trask's succinct yet abundant written words in select publications have manifested into critical theories and methodologies in my scholarly work as an Indigenous Pacific feminist. I specifically pull from Trask's poetically cogent ideas in three separate works: her book *From a Native Daughter*; her essay "Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization"; and her poem "Sons," from *Light in a Crevice Never Seen*. As I will elaborate upon in later sections, each piece distinctly addresses a theoretical and methodological means of approaching Indigenous Pacific feminist inquiry and analyses, namely a trans-Indigenous Pacific lens, an Indigenous Pacific feminist eros, and solidarity building through baskets of resilience. In these ways and more, Trask's writing can serve as a decolonial and anticolonial tool for advancing Indigenous Pacific feminisms to form just and liberated futures for all.

Looking into the archives of her work, one may notice Trask's gradual distancing from a feminist identity—her response to the shortcomings and failures of first world feminism for a Kānaka 'Ōiwi *wahine*. I acknowledge this position and am careful not to name her and her scholarship as feminist; but I believe this fact neither waters down nor detracts from Trask's irrefutable contributions to Indigenous feminisms as she broke ground for Native women of the Pacific and beyond to build our movements on. We must remember that generations of Indigenous women have been theorizing and enacting sovereignty, safety, care, and solidarity long before feminism as a field of study was established in the academy.

## Where Are We in This: Trask's Critques of Feminism

Feminism has been historically rooted in Western liberal politics, centering on an emerging consciousness and mobilization for the social advancement of women in the late nineteenth century. This period is often referred to as "first wave feminism" and falls within the classification of "first world feminism." First world feminism encompasses these "waves" of large-scale movements that have occurred in what are conventionally considered more developed areas of the modern world—a highly problematic distinction that does not consider "smaller" campaigns occurring among marginalized groups, thus erasing the presence and strides of non-white feminists. For instance, white feminists in the United States disregarded Black women's demands for voting rights during the movement for women's suffrage in the early twentieth century. As a result, Black feminists "began their own movements centered around the adversity that black women faced."[5]

Another major critique of first world feminism is that it only engages with issues that threaten womanhood or the advancement of women. Although such feminism is appealing to many individuals, this single lens fails to recognize that race, sexuality, gender identity, class, and other categories shape and contribute to women's struggles. Indeed, this approach overlooks issues that fall outside a narrow scope of "womanhood," which involves a form of power and privilege that many women, particularly non-white women, do not possess. In this way, first world feminism is a mainstream discourse that upholds whiteness along with (settler) colonialism and cis-heteronormativity, and lacks critical analyses of the structures of domination that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and other women and gender nonconforming people of color.

In response to this single-frame aspect of whitestream (white and mainstream) feminism, Black and Third World/Global South feminists have continuously addressed the importance of difference and intersectionality among women in working toward collective liberation. In her essay "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," Audre Lorde, one of the most influential Black feminist poets of our time, describes the simplification and generalization of women's experiences as a dangerous erasure. She writes:

> Certainly, there are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. Rather, it is our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation. . . . Too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those things are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. This results in a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous connections.[6]

Lorde states that to acknowledge the differences in our distinct positionalities as women is to truly examine the ways in which we are at once oppressed and complicit in oppression. As Lorde opens the door to a critical need for understanding difference in feminism, she also sheds light on the idea of multiple oppressions. Similarly, in "Under Western Eyes," Chandra Mohanty challenges first world feminists' homogenization

of patriarchy, looking at how this construction impacts women in what the West considers the "third world" by asserting that women's various oppressions are nuanced by intersections of race, class, and nation.[7] In "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers," Gloria Anzaldúa names a close sentiment as she considers "the fears, the angers, the strengths of a woman under triple or quadruple oppression."[8] Thus, feminist interventions should account for the ways in which the numerous positions and identities we hold unveil different relationships with power.

Black feminist legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited for coining the term "intersectionality" in response to the ways that feminist theory and antiracist politics have treated issues of race and gender as mutually exclusive, a "single categorical axis" that discriminates and excludes Black women.[9] She then argues, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."[10] Just as Lorde, Mohanty, and Anzaldúa articulate the critical need to account for difference in analyzing dynamics between power and identity, Crenshaw directs us to look at the intersectionality of privilege and oppression within feminism in order to fully understand how these variations shape individual experiences.

In the early stages of her academic career, Trask aligned her passions and interests with "the rising tide of feminism," crediting the intellectual influences of women in the 1970s who "were loudly asserting an alternative vision of life through the power of creative imagination."[11] This commitment is evident in her 1981 book, *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory*, based on her dissertation, in which she thoroughly examines the historical conditions of women in relation to patriarchy, citing renowned white poets such as Adrienne Rich and Robin Morgan. Still, in the afterword of this text, she offers critical insights for white feminists with regard to their stances on race, culture, and nature. In one such moment, she posits: "Just as women's daily life gave rise to feminist analysis, so too should feminist activity against racism give rise to a larger consciousness about the life of people of color. What this consciousness will look like in a theoretical form remains to be seen. But white feminists must turn their focus toward a different kind of consciousness-raising: alongside their explorations of male power they must now add investigations of white power."[12] Despite feminist theory's exhibited potential for dismantling patriarchy, Trask confronted and interrogated it for the same reasons that Black and Third World/South feminists challenge white, mainstream feminisms—the absence of difference and intersectionality.

More specifically, however, the paramount shortcoming of feminism for Trask was the great degree to which it maintained associations with the first world, namely the United States, along with its historical and ongoing projects of (settler) colonialism and imperialism. Trask's essay "Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization: The View of a Hawaiian Feminist," published in 1984, shows how her identity as a Kānaka Maoli *wahine* is inextricable from that of a Native Hawaiian nationalist. Because of the United States' illegal occupation of Hawai'i, Trask holds that she is doubly colonized as an Indigenous person and as a woman. She explains her personal relationship

between feminism and nationalism, offering this sentiment: "As I fight American imperialism and its agonizing effects on my people, I must work and live with my Hawaiian brothers who would add to the burden of colonialism another burden of sexual oppression and domination. Yet, I will not leave my people–women and men–in the face of their oppression."[13] Though Black, Third World/South, and Indigenous feminisms have parallels in their intersectional analyses of power, challenges with first world and whitestream feminisms, and desires for a collectively better future, Trask illustrates a distinct objective of many Indigenous feminisms to decolonize and restore Indigenous sovereignty.

In her essay "Feminism and Hawaiian Nationalism" from 1996, Trask disavows feminist theory, particularly drawing attention to how she sees it as an inadequate framework for confronting the struggles of Native Hawaiians. She writes that, for Kānaka Maoli, women's issues are inseparable from problems stemming from illegal US occupation and (settler) colonialism. Therefore, their struggles cannot be isolated as solely feminist problems and must always be addressed in conversation with indigeneity. Additionally, Trask states:

> Given our nationalist context, feminism appeared as just another haole intrusion into a besieged Hawaiian world. Any exclusive focus on women neglected the historical oppression of all Hawaiians and the large force field of imperialism. Now that I was working among my people, I saw there were simply too many limitations in the scope of feminist theory and praxis. The feminism I had studied was just too white, too American. Only issues defined by white women as "feminist" had structured discussions. Their language revolved around First World "rights" talk, that Enlightenment individualism that takes for granted "individual" primacy. Last, but in many ways most troubling, feminist style was aggressively American.[14]

These remarks reflect the significant problems of first world feminisms for Black and Third World/South feminists. Moreover, Trask critiques feminism for being a foreign introduction that fails to capture the experiences of Hawai'i and their Native people, noting that, "First World feminist theory is incapable of addressing indigenous women's cultural worlds."[15] She adds that Hawaiian sovereignty "is a larger goal than legal or educational or political equality with our men," and unlike whitestream feminists, Kānaka Maoli women are uplifting all of their people in their fight for liberation, regardless of gender identity.[16] In this sense, Trask views feminism as an insufficient vehicle for pursuing the needs of Native Hawaiians as a whole. She strongly concludes this paper by adding, "More than a feminist, I am a nationalist, trained by my family and destined by my genealogy to speak and work on my people's behalf, including our women."[17]

Trask's intellectual and personal journey with feminism is not an isolated experience. Like Trask, I have struggled to find myself in a realm of feminisms that remains entrenched in whitestream feminist ideologies. Not until I generated profound connections with Black, Third World/South, and other Indigenous feminisms around the world was I able to make two important observations. First, other forms of feminisms

exist outside of the whitestream and first world distinctions. Second, if certain feminisms or spheres of analysis and inquiry do not properly reflect a given group's histories, beliefs, and ambitions, then they have the agency to create new ones that best represent and serve them. In a sea of feminisms, Indigenous peoples from the Pacific need and deserve a feminist space to call their own.

## Indigenous Pacific Feminisms

I view Trask as one of many strong women in a lineage of mana wahine who have shaped a field that I understand as Indigenous Pacific feminisms. We have spent a short time looking at what Indigenous Pacific feminisms *are not* (i.e., first-world feminisms that center whiteness and lack difference and intersectionality). But how do we define Indigenous Pacific feminism? Moreover, should we attempt to define it, especially in the language of the colonizer, or is there inherent harm in attempting to contain an ocean of experiences and knowledge? The following paragraphs move through contexts and questions that address these issues.

I want to first note why I have proceeded with this name, Indigenous Pacific feminisms, despite being familiar with the recent usage of ocean or oceanic feminisms to encompass the histories and struggles of women in the Pacific Islands region. I deeply appreciate the wide-reaching aspect of this name because the ocean is what nourishes the connections between the peoples and cultures that steward them. However, the ocean is large and vast, inclusive of other islands and peoples in the Atlantic, Indian, and Arctic regions, which is why I am careful not to utilize the term *oceanic* when particularly referencing the Pacific.

On another note, Oceania geographically references the various land masses—continent, countries, islands—of the Pacific Ocean. It is a name that typically includes the Pacific Islands in Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia along with Australia. Oceania, and its boundaries are understood differently in political arenas like the United Nations or in academic settings. For instance, there is ongoing debate as to whether Taiwan, Ryukyu, Kuril, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other areas are included as part of Oceania. The benefit of using Oceania to describe a field of feminist study is that it is expansive and casts a wide net to unite the islanders and Indigenous peoples of the Pacific. This is a powerful notion; however, as Indigenous peoples of this ocean, our feminist interventions must be shaped in contrast and opposition to white, (settler) colonial, imperial, and mainstream discourses emerging from the banner of Oceania. In many instances, Oceania is used to reference larger states such as Australia or New Zealand while smaller islands of the Pacific become secondary points of reference (if not completely overshadowed). It is therefore an intentional move to utilize the name Indigenous Pacific feminisms to denote the specificity of the focus area and their Native peoples' shared consciousness. This article also builds upon existing Indigenous work that is framed as part of a Pacific feminist genealogy. With all this in mind, is the name "Indigenous Pacific feminisms" sufficient? Does it detract or disconnect from other Indigenous feminisms rooted in Oceania?

Second, I observe this area of study as part of a larger field of Indigenous feminisms, focusing on the knowledges of Native Pacific peoples on issues related to women and gender-diverse individuals. As such, do Indigenous Pacific feminisms incorporate the work of non-Native people? If so, what ethics and protocols are we employing in these forms of research? Do we consider all work created by Indigenous Pacific women and gender-diverse people to be part of this field, regardless of the subject?

Last, and perhaps the most difficult series of questions, who decides what Indigenous Pacific feminisms look, feel, taste, and sound like? Do we listen to a select few in the academy, or do we expand our net widely to the numerous corners of our communities to include organizers and creatives? How can we ensure that different groups across the Pacific have an equitable voice in contouring the field, rather than just amplifying the visibility of some?

It is irrefutable that we must give careful time and energy to delineating what this area of study is (and is not), but for now I believe that the most important question we should be asking ourselves is this—what do Indigenous Pacific feminisms aspire to achieve? I offer once again the words of Trask, our Pacific daughter relative: "I am a leader, and my obligation is to lead, both our women and our men. This is my duty to our people—all of them: the ancestors, the living, the yet to be born."[18] If we Indigenous peoples desire to sustain our cultures, languages, lands, waters, and peoples, then our feminisms should embody our dreams of liberation and fulfillment. Let us now venture into how Trask's insights can serve as a guiding light toward an Indigenous Pacific feminist framework.

## Umbilical Wisdom: A Trans-Indigenous Pacific Analytic

The word *piko* in *ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi* (Hawaiian language) is rich and multiple in meaning: umbilicus, summit, navel, node, convergence. Across the Pacific, the umbilical cord embodies a shared cultural significance through Indigenous place-based practices, mainly in its ritual burial. The umbilical cord in Samoan culture, for instance, is ceremoniously returned to the land after it separates from a newborn baby, and the *pute* or navel, the scar from where the umbilicus was cut, represents the final symbol and stage in the completion of the *peʻa* (Samoan male tattoo). In Fiji, iTaukei believe that an umbilical cord must be grounded, planted in the earth, or else the child will be lost or restless. Christine Taitano DeLisle draws attention to the importance of the placenta along with the umbilicus in Pacific Island customs, elaborating on how the cord can be further understood as a chain or tether that binds a person to a place as an act of care, reciprocity, and responsibility. She also coins the term "placental politics" as an Indigenous feminist move of "enacting and employing knowledge and sacred practices, like the burying of the gaʻchong i patgon (placenta)" to disrupt hegemonic narratives of CHamoru women as docile, fixed subjects during the US naval government period of Guåhan's history.[19]

In her groundbreaking text, *From a Native Daughter*, Trask evokes a similar Indigenous feminist lens when she poignantly writes, "We are stewards of the earth, our mother, and we offer an ancient, umbilical wisdom about how to protect her life."[20]

This passage demonstrates the profound and intimate ways in which certain Pacific communities know, see, and remember the lands and waters we call kin, which is a relationship we recall through the umbilical cord. CHamorus, the Indigenous people of *Låguas yan Gåni*, known as the Mariana Islands, believe that our *taotaomo'na* (people who came before) emerged from the rock formation of *Fo'na*, the first divine, feminine element. The creation story of Belau holds that their Native people descend from the ocean and their sea life. When thinking about the cosmologies of Pacific Island cultures, we can see how the umbilical cord can further serve as a point of resonance where Indigenous feminists can meet.

I do not intend to essentialize the significance of the umbilical cord as a site of reproductive ability or domesticity for women. Rather, I propose that Trask's conceptualization of an umbilical wisdom offers us a critical trans-Indigenous Pacific feminist analytic, borrowing from a transnational framework emerging from Third World politics and feminisms that challenge the nation-state and its imposed boundaries. In the introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Mohanty writes that Third World feminisms include the "imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the *political* threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic."[21] She defines "imagined communities" as groups of people who are connected in their struggles against racism, capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and bound in a profound commitment to future collaboration and coalition across borders. Several scholars argue that, although extremely useful in looking at shared histories and movements across time and space, transnational feminism "at once articulates the current state of the problem—think how many Native nations cross current national borders" and concretizes attention and relation to the nation-state, which should be dismantled rather than reified.[22]

My work is informed by this interrogation of the nation-state and explores a transnational analytic through what I view as a trans-Indigenous Pacific intervention: an engagement in a theory and practice of umbilical wisdom that allows our stories and struggles to flow through our islands, which have been cartographically dismembered into divisions of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. If we are to understand feminism as the movement to dismantle patriarchy and all its entanglements that oppress us, then Indigenous Pacific feminisms should disrupt colonial formations of our containment and connection. Epeli Hau'ofa invites us to recognize our place in this shared Pacific Ocean as a "sea of islands," a world our ancestors freely traversed without boundaries.[23] Trask cites Larry Kamakawiwo'ole's statement that "trespassing was foreign to Polynesia," an idea that I would certainly extend to the rest of the Pacific.[24] In a more expansive manner, Trask reminds us that our ties to one another flow in ancestral relation to one another.

I have applied this understanding of umbilical wisdom elsewhere by looking at the shared histories and hauntings of abortion that flow through Guåhan and Hawai'i.[25] Navigating the stories that link CHamoru *famalao'an* (women) to Kānaka Maoli *wāhine* beyond the hyper-emphasized connection of US political domination as an unincorporated territory and state was an intentional move to remember that our

ancestral relations outnumber our shared experiences with colonialism. To provide an example, I speak about the more recently visible (yet simultaneously concealed) mobility of CHamoru and non-Native women and gender-diverse people from the Mariana Islands to Hawai'i, namely the movement from Guåhan to O'ahu. This mobility is not surprising at first because these islands are typically framed as US possessions in the Pacific, consecutive stops on trade routes and flight paths.

Rather than analyze Guåhan and O'ahu through the lens of nation and empire, I locate this travel as a trajectory along which women and gender-diverse folks move to receive abortions, a reproductive health service that is now completely unavailable in a clinical setting in the Mariana Islands. Seeking the ties among Pacific women and their struggles outside the isolation and restrictions of the US nation-state is a mode of umbilical wisdom, centering on our ancestral relations rather than on our colonial connections. Although I do not specifically name a trans-Indigenous Pacific feminist framework in the piece I previously wrote, I recognize now that an understanding and application of umbilical wisdom actively pushes against the multitude of ways in which colonization has stood at the forefront of mediating the relationship among Guåhan, Hawai'i, and the rest of the islands in our vast Pacific.[26]

## An Indigenous Pacific Eros

Feminism is typically positioned in opposition to patriarchy, the systemic disenfranchisement and unequal distribution of social, political, and economic power of men over women. This form of domination exists in both overt and subliminal ways, such as male-dominated spheres of influence or a woman's internalized feelings of inferiority to men. In recent years, many Black, Indigenous, Third World/South, and other feminists of color have clarified this patriarchal superiority to be white, cis-heteropatriarchal normativity, a political and social status quo that centers white, cis-heterosexual men among other privileged positions like class, education, religion, and more. As a result, a plethora of identities and relations that fall beyond this normative scope are marginalized, obscured, and erased.

Eroticism, for instance, is an innate way of knowing the world, knowing one's self, and knowing one another. It is an extremely personal and intimate form of power that has been perverted under patriarchy as being purely sexual or pornographic. Black feminists have discussed this corruption at great length. For example, in her critical essay "Uses of the Erotic," Lorde articulates the significance of the erotic as the fulfillment of our innermost desires and the channels to actualizing our most authentic selves. She encourages us to explore the ways in which our feelings and dreams are repressed "in the face of a racist, capitalist, and anti-erotic society," and to critically survey the function of such repression as a mode of domination.[27] Pursuing our erotic pleasures is certainly for individual satisfaction, but more importantly it is an act of liberation, as it threatens the structures that seek to oppress us. Lorde explains, "For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with the joy which we know ourselves to be capable of. Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens

through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives."[28] For women and gender-diverse peoples especially, an awareness and care of our eroticism—to the things, people, and processes that make us feel the most impassioned—opens alternate potentials and futures for our current state of being. The erotic unveils our affect, an embodied and felt knowledge of possibilities beyond the patriarchy.

In *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory*, Trask introduces the "feminist eros" as "the unique human energy which springs from the desire for existence with meaning, for a consciousness informed by feeling, for experience that integrates the sensual and the rational, the spiritual and the political."[29] This idea is informed by an understanding that the erotic "can transform the merely sexual into an expansive life-force, into a commitment to life which is grounded in women's experiences."[30] Thus, the feminist eros is bound to an erotic sense of love and power, two constant sites of struggle and strength for women under the patriarchy.

Just as Lorde framed the erotic, so Trask relays the liberatory potential of a feminist eros as a return to a way of life that directly opposes and unsettles a cis-heteropatriarchal society:

> [It] is knowingly antiauthoritarian because its measurement is women's experiential knowledge of life as a reciprocal, sharing interdependence rather than a dominating possessive bondage; it is consciously "timeless," literally reclaiming time by uncovering repression and allowing the thread of need and desire to assert the priority of human relationship over structure, ideology, and aggression; it is a mindful alternative to achievement as ceaseless conquest through a living which is sensuous, and attentive to the needs of life before the demands of a dominating civilization. In freeing time from the bondage of repression, the feminist Eros is critical, indeed dangerous to patriarchal civilization. But it is the kind of danger inherent in challenge, in risk, in attempting something immeasurably greater than what is threatened.[31]

Here, Trask highlights an existence predicated upon reciprocity and sensuality instead of subjugation, an alternative present and future for all who remain oppressed under current cis-heteropatriarchal structures to aspire toward. She further adds that the "feminist Eros thus unleashes a desire—for creative expression . . . for sharing and interdependence without bondage," which points us, Indigenous Pacific feminists, in potential directions to reach and actualize this liberated mode of being.[32]

Trask explores such a desire for creative expression in "Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization," one of two chapters she authored in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*. So gifted with encapsulating large ideas into small strands of powerful words, Trask delivers yet another beautifully succinct thought: "Rage is entangled with rapture, with spiritual and emotional possession by the beauty of our islands."[33]

This line illuminates a complex richness to which Indigenous Pacific feminists can relate and understand the erotic. To understand that the totality of our emotions and lived experiences as women and Native people is not merely welded in opposition

to oppression but is instead a confluence of the most difficult and most beautiful moments of our lives is to tap into our feminist erotic, the substance of our most intense pleasure and joy, which patriarchy, colonialism, and cis-heteronormativity take away from us. The rage that stems from the destruction and desecration of our lands, water, culture, personhood, and sacredness as women and gender-diverse kin is informed by the rapture that our relations with these things grants us. These feelings are place-based, embodied truths sourced from connection to our landscapes and seascapes, nonhuman and more-than-human kin. Kānaka ʻŌiwi professor and poet Noʻu Revilla closely ushers forth this knowledge when she speaks of *aloha* as both rage and rapture.

We can therefore expand this comprehension of rage and rapture into a larger Indigenous Pacific feminist eros, a reciprocal and sensuous form of being, thinking, and connecting. This distinction is not a complete departure from Trask's original definition. For instance, she highlights the desire for "interdependence" within the feminist eros, which certainly corresponds to the communal and relational aspect of numerous Pacific Island cultures. In addition, Trask writes, "No more should women reject their 'relational subjectivity' as a measure of reality or a basis for valuation and judgement. On the contrary, they should cultivate its best aspects as a springboard to wisdom and alternative imaginings."[34] In this manner, she draws attention to the need for the feminist eros to be both personal and subjective, which also coincides with the intimacies behind the feelings of rage and rapture. However, when employed as an Indigenous Pacific feminist theory, the feminist eros in this regard necessitates an expressed characteristic of channeling the erotic in relation to land, water, and the natural world.

In the section where Trask places "human relationship over structure, ideology, and aggression" as part of the feminist eros, integrating human-to-human, human-to-nonhuman, human-to-more-than-human, and the limitless possibilities of other unmentioned relationships would enhance its meaning and be more fitting to an Indigenous Pacific feminist framework. I would add to this Melissa K. Nelson's description of an Indigenous feminist eco-erotics, "a type of *meta* (after, higher)-sexual or *trans* (over, beyond)-sexual intimate ecological encounter in which we are momentarily and simultaneously taken outside of ourselves by the beauty, or sometimes horror, of the more-than-human natural world."[35] Borrowing from Stacy Alaimo, Nelson represents cross-species encounters as the "contact zone," which is, "a messy, visceral, eco-erotic boundary-crossing entanglement of difference that can engender empathy and kinship and a lived environmental ethic."[36] These junctions open us to "carnal knowledge" and sensuality as a way of knowing the world but also instill responsibility, respect, and "imaginative and spiritual capacities to be in intimate relationship with the more-than-human world."[37]

In thinking about the different ways that our rage is enmeshed with our rapture, a productive space emerges to critique and confront patriarchy. Because such feelings are made known through a network of relationships grounded in the land and water, we can think of this space as being akin to Nelson's utilization of contact zones, which is where an Indigenous Pacific feminist eros can intervene with "a potent and possibly 'dirty' fusion of theories and methods."[38] According to Trask, the feminist eros reaches for "a passionate link between the mind and body" and "a multi-layered, intimate

knowledge of the physical and the instinctual."[39] An Indigenous Pacific feminist eros can therefore be understood as an area in which theory and practice engage in reciprocity, and relationality pushes against systems of domination through the sensuality of intimate, erotic, and eco-erotic ways of knowing the world.

## Baskets of Resilience as Solidarity Building

Of all her poetry, Trask's "Sons" from *Light in a Crevice Never Seen*, her first collection of poems, is one of her most cited and cherished works to this day. The following lines are popularly referenced among her *lāhui* and in academic and writing circles:

> I am slyly
> reproductive: ideas
> books, histories
> politics, reproducing
> the rope of resistance for unborn generations.[40]

Revilla, as an example, draws from the beginning of this passage and calls herself "a lifetime 'slyly/reproductive' student of Haunani-Kay Trask."[41] In an interview with Revilla, Kānaka Maoli writer leilani portillo also references "Sons," and explains that "being slyly reproductive and evoking Haunani-Kay Trask brings to light the myriad ways 'Ōiwi can and do take control of our life stories."[42]

In another manner, Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua draws from the latter part of the passage in a book chapter detailing how the "rope of resistance" can serve as methodologies in Hawaiian studies. She begins the chapter with an epigraph featuring these lines from "Sons," and then explains that "Trask poetically reassures us that, before we were born, those Kanaka who came before us have been twining stories of intellectual rope for us to use."[43] She proceeds to explain how four tenets of Hawaiian studies—*lāhui*, *ea* (breath, sovereignty), *kuleana* (responsibility), and *pono* (moral good, righteousness)—can be viewed as individual cords that can be woven together to form "a rope that holds this wide and growing field together."[44] She uses a rope of resistance as a theory and method of connection and draws upon this image to reflect upon the existence of other cords or practices of braiding that can create larger ropes. Goodyear-Kaʻōpua evokes Trask again when she adds, "We must find selectively promiscuous ways to reproduce the ropes of resistance and of survivance. We must train new generations in how these ropes have historically been used and also allow them to practice finding innovative uses of their own."[45]

Like Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, I pull an Indigenous Pacific feminist methodology from "Sons," specifically from the following lines:

> And I
> I stay behind
> weaving fine baskets
> of resilience
> to carry our daughters in.[46]

I view the image of baskets of resilience and the process of weaving as a way to think about trans-Indigenous Pacific connection and coalition.

Comparable to the prevailing significance of the umbilical cord across various Pacific cultures is the multifaceted importance of baskets. Entwined from various natural elements like pandanus, raffia, or coconut tree leaves, baskets traditionally functioned as vessels in which to hold or transport things. They could also serve decorative purposes, but baskets further symbolize hope and promise, especially that of girls and women. This meaning is clear in Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's book title, *Iep Jāltok*, which is defined as "'A basket whose opening is facing the speaker.' Said of female children. She represents a basket whose contents are made available to her relatives. Also refers to matrilineal society of the Marshallese."[47]

The baskets that Trask describes are objects resilient enough to carry daughters—the living and future generations of women—within. This depiction offers several ways to envision solidarity within Indigenous Pacific feminisms. First, the processes involved in creating these baskets, such as gathering the natural materials or weaving the product, are nestled within the actions of community. This capacity means that the sturdiness, structure, and ability of the baskets to reach their functional potential rely on a network of people. Second, the resilience does not comply with the neoliberal framing of an individualistic path toward healing that fails to address the root of the struggles Indigenous peoples are expected to overcome. As I mention elsewhere, this resilience is instead the act of braiding the fibers of our individual selves into a larger network, symbolizing the communal linking of struggles and dreams of liberation across islands.[48]

We can thus think about Indigenous Pacific feminisms as baskets of resilience: instruments with which we can achieve just worlds and better futures. The shape and structure of these baskets require the combined efforts of a community and further necessitates an understanding that all these strands come together to form a whole. If one piece is forgotten or if one step is missed, then the entire project fails. The process of weaving is an integration of materials and energy; it loops in mutual care and responsibility for the task at hand. Engaging in trans-Indigenous solidarity through Trask's theorization of resilient basket-making entwines the joys and struggles of different communities within Indigenous Pacific feminisms, which sustains our relations and commitment to one another beyond external structures of domination.

## Conclusion

In a 2019 article exploring the uses of Indigenous and transnational feminist alliances in response to settler colonialism, Kanaka ʻŌiwi scholar Maile Arvin outlines the contributions and criticisms of Trask in feminist and settler colonial studies. On one hand, Trask "has been critiqued for her disavowal of feminism, particularly for failing to see or engage in deeper alliances between Indigenous feminisms and women of color feminisms."[49] Though Trask's issues with feminism are situated in its continuing amplification of whitestream narratives, it is important to think about what other

marginalized communities get left behind in her rejection of feminism. On the other hand, Arvin acknowledges that Trask's work of challenging settler colonial and patriarchal structures remains especially salient for Kānaka Maoli and other Indigenous feminists. While Arvin does not seek to push an Indigenous feminist identity onto Trask or her work, she notes that Trask serves "as a key example for thinking through how we change the citation politics of theories of settler colonialism and better recognize Indigenous feminist contributions."[50]

Like Arvin, this paper does not attempt to confine Trask's legacy to a feminist agenda, or to a Native feminist theorist or Indigenous Pacific feminist frame. We must respect her insights and opinions on feminism. At the same time, we can continue to honor Trask's mana as the energy from which we gain inspiration to sustain our fight for the liberation of women, gender-diverse kin, and the Pacific at large. When we think of who we are descended from, the individuals who have made sacrifices for us, or the people who have molded us into who we are today, we must never forget the mana wahine who came before us. We must remember all the ways that they, as Trask poetically phrases, have slyly reproduced ropes of resistance for unborn generations.

As we focus on our aspirations for what Indigenous Pacific Island feminisms should do, we must also ponder and envision what this space could do. What are the possibilities of umbilical wisdoms, a feminist eros, and baskets of resilience in generating a wider net of relations across the Pacific? What other ways can the efforts of Trask and other mana wahine be employed as Indigenous Pacific feminist tools to dismantle patriarchy? What does a future grounded in Indigenous Pacific feminisms look like in our homelands and in the diaspora?

When we engage in this work, we take our place in "a continuing refusal to be silent."[51] When we place our hopes in responsibility and connection with one another, we give life to worlds that are abundant enough "to carry our daughters in."[52]

*Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua and kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui for inviting me to submit a paper for this very special issue of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. I also want to extend my deepest appreciation to Noenoe Silva, for thoroughly reviewing my work, Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, for her guidance in the early stages of my project, and Monisha Das Gupta, for her support in completing this article.

## Notes

1. Haunani-Kay Trask and Mililani Trask, transcribed by Joan Lander, "Speeches from the Centennial of the Overthrow, 'Iolani Palace, January 17, 1993," in *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific*, ed. Jeffrey Carroll, Brandy McDougall, and Georganne Nordstrom (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 99.

2. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 18.

3. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Sons," in *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis, OR: CALYX Books, 1994), 56.

4. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization: The View of a Hawaiian Feminist" (working paper, Michigan State University Working Papers on Women in International Development, March 1984), 15.

5. Arianna DelMastro, "The Pervading Problems of First-World Feminism," *The Osprey*, February 2, 2020, https://ospreyonline.org/6014/showcase/the-pervading-problems-of-first-world-feminism/.

6. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 115.

7. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles,'" in *Feminist Theory Reader*, ed. Carole McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2016).

8. Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 171.

9. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 140, https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

10. Ibid.

11. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism," *Signs*, Feminist Theory and Practice 21, no. 4 (1996): 908, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3175028.

12. Haunani-Kay Trask, *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 180.

13. Trask, "Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization," 15.

14. Haunani-Kay Trask, "Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism," 909–10.

15. Ibid., 910.

16. Ibid., 914.

17. Ibid., 915.

18. Ibid., 915.

19. Christine Taitano DeLisle, *Placental Politics: CHamoru Women, White Womanhood, and Indigeneity under U.S. Colonialism in Guam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 6.

20. Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 59.

21. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 4.

22. Maylei Blackwell, Laura Briggs, and Mignonette Chiu, "Transnational Feminisms Roundtable," *Frontier: A Journal of Women's Studies* 36, no. 3 (2015): 3, https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.36.3.0001.

23. Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 152, http://www.jstor.org/stable/230701593.

24. Larry Kamakawiwo'ole, *HSB 22 Sept. 1971*, quoted in Haunani-Kay Trask, "Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, O'ahu," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 21 (1987): 150, http//hdl.handle.net/10524/144.

25. Ha'åni Lucia Falo San Nicolas, "Building Baskets of Resilience: Weaving Histories of Reproductive Justice from Hawai'i to Guåhan" (unpublished manuscript, October 17, 2021).

26. Ibid., 17.

27. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 59.

28. Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 57.

29. Trask, "Eros and Power," 92–93.

30. Ibid., 94.

31. Ibid., 94–95.

32. Trask, "Eros and Power," 94.

33. Trask, "Writing in Captivity," 19.

34. Trask, "Eros and Power," 93.

35. Melissa K. Nelson, "Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literatures," in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. Joanne Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 230.

36. Nelson, "Getting Dirty," 232.

37. Ibid.

38. Nelson, "Getting Dirty," 233.

39. Trask, "Eros and Power," 94.

40. Trask, "Sons," 56.

41. "no'u revilla," accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.nourevilla.com.

42. leilani portillo, Punahele, and No'u Revilla, ""It Is Okay to Spit Fire on Our Oppressors": Interview with leilani portillo and Punahele," *Biography* 43, no. 3 (2020): 593, https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2020.0066.

43. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, "Reproducing the Ropes of Resistance: Hawaiian Studies Methodologies," in *Kanaka 'Ōiwi Methodologies: Mo'olelo and Metaphor*, ed. Katrina-Ann R. Kapa'anaokalaokeola Oliveira and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 1.

44. Ibid., 2.

45. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, "Reproducing the Ropes," 19.

46. Trask, "Sons," 56.

47. Kathy Jetn̄il-Kijiner, "Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter" (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 2.

48. San Nicolas, "Building Baskets of Resilience," 16–17.

49. Maile Arvin, "Indigenous Feminist Notes on Embodying Alliance against Settler Colonialism," *Meridians* 18, no. 2 (October 2019), 338, https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-7775663.

50. Ibid., 339.

51. Trask, "Feminism and Hawaiian Nationalism," 20.

52. Trask, "Sons," 56.